

THE ROLE OF IDENTITY STYLE IN RECONSTRUCTING THE SELF
FOLLOWING SELF-DISCREPANT INFORMATION

By

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The present study examined whether individual differences in identity style predispose individuals to differentially process, evaluate, and utilize self-discrepant information. Participants in this study were identified as utilizing either an information-oriented, a normative, or a diffuse/avoidant identity style and received bogus personality feedback based on a projective test. One half of the participants were given feedback that disconfirmed an attribute that they had indicated was both descriptive of them and important to their sense of self. The other half of the participants were given confirming feedback on this attribute. Participants then recalled the confirming or disconfirming information as well as personal experiences relevant to the information, rated their perceptions of the test and their test performance,

indicated their interest in obtaining additional evaluative information, and provided post-feedback self-ratings on the attribute. Results provided mixed support for an individual differences model of identity development. On the one hand, the findings contradicted the primary hypothesis that individuals utilizing different identity styles would respond differently to discrepant information about the self. On the other hand, the results helped to elucidate the differential means by which the informational and diffuse/avoidant identity styles, in particular, direct the interpretation and integration of confirming versus disconfirming self-relevant information. The implications of these results for a process conceptualization of identity formation as well as the areas of stress management, therapeutic change, and prejudice reduction are discussed.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Erikson (1959, 1968) has written extensively about the development of a coherent sense of self-identity as the primary psychosocial task facing adolescents. According to Erikson (1975), identity ushers in adulthood, as it bridges the gap between the experiences of childhood and the personal goals, values, and decisions that permit each young person to take his or her place in society. This self-structure is thought to evolve through the exploration of, and subsequent commitment to, those sexual, moral, political, religious, and vocational ideologies considered to be personally effective for construing life events (Erikson, 1959). Likewise, experts in the area of social cognition have conceptualized identity as an evolving, self-constructed theory about oneself, or self-relevant configuration, that serves as a framework for answering questions about the purpose and meaning of life (see Berzonsky, 1989a, 1990; Epstein, 1973; Marcia, 1980; Schlenker, 1986; Swann, 1987).

Most researchers have employed James Marcia's (1966) identity status paradigm in their attempts to provide empirical validation for Erikson's (1959) theory of identity development. Acknowledging the premium that

Erikson (1959) placed on one's reported experience with self-exploration and commitment, Marcia (1966) identified four identity classifications marked by high or low levels of exploration and commitment: Foreclosure (commitment without current or past self-exploration); Moratorium (ongoing self-exploration in the absence of commitment); Diffusion (absence of both self-exploration and commitment); and Achievement (past self-exploration indicated and commitment present).

Marcia's (1966) operationalization of identity formation along differential levels or statuses emphasized the relatively stable and distinct developmental positions attained by individuals in their search for identity. In a different vein, Berzonsky (1990) recently elaborated a model of identity development that highlights the process by which identity-relevant information and experiences are evaluated and utilized in the development and maintenance of a coherent self-structure. He predicted that individuals grouped according to Marcia's (1966) taxonomy would differ in the social-cognitive processes they use to make decisions and negotiate identity issues.

According to Berzonsky's (1988, 1989a) model, individuals differ in the orientation they employ to construct, maintain, and revise their self-identities. He postulated three different identity processing styles: 1) Information-oriented or "scientific," 2) Normative-oriented

or "dogmatic", and 3) Diffuse/avoidant-oriented or "ad hoc" (Berzonsky, 1989a).

Individuals utilizing an information-oriented identity style tend to play a more active role in forging their identities (Berzonsky, 1990, 1991b). Their orientation disposes them to seek out self-diagnostic information, test self-constructs, and make necessary revisions in their self-structure (Sorrentino, Raynor, Zubek, & Short, 1990). This orientation is hypothesized to be the primary approach utilized by self-examining individuals who would be categorized as identity achieved or in a state of moratorium according to Marcia's (1980) identity status criteria.

Individuals employing a normative style in defining themselves tend to devote less deliberate effort to the elaboration and testing of self-relevant information. Rather, they internalize the normative expectations and dictates of significant others (e.g., parents) and reference groups (e.g., peers; Berzonsky, 1992b). Moreover, their primary concern with minimizing potential threats to this co-opted self-structure motivates them to conserve existing self-views. This style is characteristic of Marcia's (1980) foreclosed identity.

Individuals utilizing the diffuse/avoidant processing orientation are typically more passive in the construction of their identities, reporting less control over and personal responsibility for the identity they possess

(Berzonsky, 1991a). They tend to function as "ad hoc" self-theorists who characteristically avoid dealing with identity questions by procrastinating as long as possible until they must rely on contextual demands and situational consequences to generate a response (Berzonsky, 1990, 1991a). This externally oriented approach is hypothesized to be associated with Marcia's (1980) diffuse identity, which characterizes individuals who lack firm convictions and who have not engaged in self-exploration.

In the tradition of constructivism (Kelly, 1955), Berzonsky's (1990) process model of identity assumes that individuals construct their own psychosocial development in such a way that they become more effective at organizing their experiences, predicting future events, and guiding their behaviors. Moreover, the model assumes that individuals will be involved in an ongoing renegotiation of their identities across the life span as feedback from experience is continuously evaluated, processed, and utilized (Berzonsky, 1990).

Much of the information and experiences that individuals encounter in the course of daily living will be consistent with their self-views and therefore construed and assimilated with minimal attentional effort (Langer, Blank, & Chanowitz, 1978). However, careful monitoring and evaluation may be necessary, as well as subsequent accommodative efforts, when the information is incompatible

with the existing identity structure. Thus, information that necessitates a revision of self-conceptions is likely to be perceived and processed differently from information that implicates conserving the integrity of the self.

Central to Berzonsky's (1990) individual differences account is the notion that the differential processing and evaluation of confirmatory and disconfirmatory information should depend on stylistic differences in self-construction. According to Berzonsky (1990), individual differences in identity style should predict variability in the propensity for engaging assimilative versus accommodative processes in response to self-relevant information and experiences.

Swann (1987) has noted that people are more likely to seek and rely on evidence that confirms rather than disconfirms their self-beliefs, presumably because they regard confirming information as more diagnostic, or at least more stabilizing, than disconfirming information. Swann and his colleagues (Swann, 1987; Swann & Read, 1981a, 1981b) have observed that this drive to confirm self-conceptions is all the more apparent when individuals are threatened by identity-discrepant information or feedback. However, the work of Berzonsky (1990, 1992c) suggests that this type of dogged adherence to prior self-beliefs may be more prevalent among certain types of individuals, depending on the ways in which they process identity-relevant information.

Berzonsky (1990) has proposed that individuals should differ, depending on their identity style, in the degree to which they will conserve the self in the face of self-discrepant feedback. For example, individuals who utilize an information-oriented style may be more likely to consider actively the implications of invalidating information and therefore adjust their self-beliefs based on the dissonant feedback. In contrast, normative-oriented individuals should operate as dogmatic self-theorists, defending against and distorting information and experiences that might potentially invalidate existing self-views (Berzonsky, 1990, 1992c).

The present research provides a test of Berzonsky's (1990) theory that variability in identity style should be associated with differential responsiveness to information that contradicts conceptions of the self. In addition to validating Berzonsky's (1990) process model of identity development, the present study has important implications for identifying stylistic differences in the effectiveness with which individuals negotiate issues relevant to the purpose and meaning of life.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter will begin with a brief overview of Erikson's (1959, 1968, 1975) psychosocial theory of identity development, followed by two conceptualizations that highlight individual differences in identity formation, with a special focus on Berzonsky's (1990) process model of identity. Evidence supporting the relationship between structural aspects of identity and processing orientations will be reviewed, and empirically validated personality and social-cognitive correlates of identity status and identity style will be considered. Next, literature regarding the relationship between identity style and the differential means by which self-relevant information is processed, evaluated, and utilized will be reviewed. Finally, a method will be proposed for examining the direct implications of social-cognitive identity styles for the processing of information that contradicts personal values and self-beliefs. This method will be detailed in the subsequent chapter where issues of design, instrumentation, and procedures are covered.

Eriksonian Theory of Psychosocial Development

Erikson's (1959) theory of psychosocial development describes the impact of social experiences on the evolution

of personality across the life span. For Erikson, personality develops through the negotiation of various psychosocial crises that are encountered across a sequence of developmental stages. Each stage emphasises a particular aspect of transaction with the social environment, and each crisis is a struggle to attain the psychological quality that is necessary in order to advance to the next stage.

The central focus of Erikson's (1959, 1968) psychosocial theory of personality is the development of a consciously experienced sense of self, or identity. During the adolescent stage of development, individuals are faced with the crisis between developing feelings of identity versus role confusion. Identity derives from an integration of private and social self-conceptions that result in a sense of personal continuity or inner congruence that allows individuals to truly appreciate what their lives as adults are to be about (Carver & Scheier, 1992). If the individual fails to form an integrated identity, the result is role-confusion, a self made up of multiple and conflicting attributes that fails to provide the individual with a sense of direction. A vast amount of research has emerged to test Erikson's (1968, 1975) conceptualization of identity development, with the majority of this work following Marcia's (1966, 1980) identity status paradigm.

Marcia's Identity Status Paradigm

Marcia (1966) employed Erikson's (1959) psychosocial concepts of self-exploratory crisis and commitment to formulate his identity status paradigm. From Erikson's (1959) perspective the process of self-construction consists of an exploration of occupational, ideological, and interpersonal choices (i.e., crisis) and an eventual commitment to a system of beliefs and values. Marcia (1966) utilized a structured interview format to assess the presence or absence of self-reported crisis and commitment within occupational, political, and ideological domains. In operational terms, crisis refers to a self-perceived active period of self-reflection and evaluation of identity-relevant information. Commitment indicates the extent to which an individual makes a firm investment in what he or she values and believes and pursues goals consistent with this resolution. The assessment of crisis and commitment served to designate four identity statuses: Achievement (crisis experienced and commitment made), Moratorium (crisis experienced and commitment not made), Foreclosure (crisis not experienced and commitment made), and Diffusion (crisis not experienced and commitment not made). The existence of these four identity statuses has been supported empirically (see Marcia, 1980 for a review), and recent research (e.g., Marcia, 1980; Waterman, 1982) has been directed at examining

the social-cognitive and personality correlates of these identity configurations.

Identity achievers are described as having experienced a period of self-exploration, or crisis, that has resulted in commitments to particular goals, values, and beliefs. The moratorium status applies to individuals who are currently exploring identity issues but have not yet made commitments. In contemporary research, achievers and moratoriums are often considered to represent the more advanced or sophisticated identity statuses because of their self-reported experiences of self-exploratory crisis (see Josselson, 1973; Marcia, 1980; Read, Adams, & Dobson, 1984). Slugoski, Marcia, and Koopman (1984) found that both moratorium individuals and identity achievers demonstrated significantly greater integrative complexity when dealing with interpersonal problems than did individuals who were foreclosed and diffuse. Integratively complex individuals use more complex social-cognitive reasoning and therefore are able to consider multiple and conflicting elements of interpersonal feedback while maintaining a self-determined perspective. Integrative complexity was identified by the authors as a primary cognitive factor in identity development because it derives out of interaction and feedback from the environment and is presumed to influence the degree to which individuals actively consider alternative ideas and integrate their experiences.

Achieved and moratorium individuals have also demonstrated the ability to process more extensive amounts of interpersonal information than have those in the foreclosed and diffuse statuses, while making fewer mistakes (Read et al., 1984). In addition, self-exploratory individuals (i.e., achieved and moratorium) tend to report a higher sense of self-worth, reject authoritarian views, have a strong sense of ethnic identification, be low in prejudice, and endorse cultural pluralism (i.e., recognize the unique contributions of multiethnic groups to the larger society; Marcia, 1967, 1980).

Foreclosure is the status of individuals who have committed themselves to particular goals, beliefs, and values without considering implications or exploring alternatives. Correlational findings indicate that identity foreclosure is positively associated with a socially defined identity, public self-consciousness, and other-directed self-monitoring (Berzonsky, Trudeau, & Brenna, 1988), as well as other-directed approaches to problem solving (Grotevant & Adams, 1984). Read et al. (1984) found that foreclosed individuals were least able to evaluate and integrate multiple and conflicting sources of interpersonal information and tended to exclude relevant information from examination. The authors attributed these findings to a less adaptive orientation toward interpersonal problems and a relatively restricted attentional focus. In other

studies, foreclosures have been found to endorse authoritarian views (Marcia, 1980), express an intolerance of ambiguity (Schenkel & Marcia, 1972), and possess rigid, change-resistant self-systems (Berzonsky & Neimeyer, 1988). Interestingly, individuals who have prematurely foreclosed their search for self-definition share a strong sense of ethnic identification with achieved and moratorium statuses; however, unlike these self-exploratory individuals, foreclosures tend to be relatively high in prejudice (Marcia, 1980), suggesting that they may maintain their collective self-esteem by creating ingroup versus outgroup comparisons.

In the fourth status, identity diffusion, individuals have yet to engage in exploration of possible identities and have yet to make commitments. Findings consistent with the view that diffuse individuals tend to operate in an avoidant and situation-specific, self-presentational manner have been observed. For example, diffusions have reported a tendency to avoid confronting personal problems and, like foreclosures, tend to rely on other-directed problem-solving strategies (Grotevant & Adams, 1984). Further, Berzonsky et al. (1988) observed that identity diffuseness was inversely correlated with a personally defined identity and private self-consciousness and positively correlated with other-directed self-monitoring and a tendency to act in a manner consistent with current situational demands. Moreover,

Berzonsky, Schlenker, & McKillop (1987) provided empirical support for the notion that diffusions are guided by self-presentational concerns; diffusions changed their views of themselves when role-playing in an actual interaction with a confederate, but not in conditions that involved a written-interview or anonymous presentation.

The Relationship Between Identity Statuses and Identity Styles

In broad terms, the distinct characteristics that typify individuals who have experienced an identity crisis (i.e., identity achieved and moratorium statuses) suggest that these individuals are actively self-reflective and tend to approach identity decisions by both seeking new information and considering others' opinions (Berzonsky, 1989b; Marcia, 1980). Compared with these self-reflective statuses, evidence suggests that foreclosures have inflexible self-systems, are likely to simplify complex issues, and tend to be overly reliant on the normative expectations of others. Further, findings serve to confirm assumptions that identity diffused individuals refer to social expectations and environmental circumstances when deciding what to believe and how to act in any given situation.

After reviewing the social-cognitive aspects of identity status, Berzonsky (1989b, 1990) proposed that the four identity configurations classified by Marcia's (1966) paradigm may indicate different styles of structuring self-

relevant information into a sense of identity. He reasoned that individuals classified as moratoriums and achievers characteristically take an information-oriented approach to forging their identity; they actively seek out and evaluate self-relevant information before making decisions relevant to their self-identity. Foreclosed individuals, on the other hand, are likely to exercise more normative-oriented strategies in self-construction; they internalize the norms set for them by authority figures and significant others and close themselves off from self-relevant information that might contradict these normative prescriptions. Diffuse individuals tend to enact an avoidant orientation or self-presentational stance when dealing with identity-relevant issues and events; they avoid confronting problems and issues until they must refer to others or expected social consequences in making self-relevant decisions.

In order to examine the relationship between identity statuses and identity styles, Berzonsky (1989b) developed a self-report identity style measure by separating the commitment and self-exploration components that are combined in objective measures of ego identity status (e.g., Grotevant & Adams, 1984). Correlational research using the Identity Style Inventory (Berzonsky, 1989b) has supported the notion of stylistic differences in the manner in which individuals classified in terms of Marcia's (1966) identity

statuses make decisions, solve personal problems, and process self-relevant information.

In the first study examining the relationship between identity statuses and identity styles, Berzonsky (1989b) administered the identity style measure and the Adams-Grotevant measure of identity status (Grotevant & Adams, 1984) to late adolescent subjects. Findings revealed that status and style were correlated in a theoretically meaningful manner, indicating that distinct social-cognitive processing orientations corresponded with the identity statuses. For example, foreclosures had the highest normative style scores and diffusions were highest on the diffuse/avoidant scale. The pattern of findings for the moratorium and achieved statuses was more complex. The relationship between these self-exploring statuses and an information-orientation appeared to be moderated by identity commitment such that making firm commitments suppressed the use of an information-oriented identity style (Berzonsky, 1990, 1992b).

Overall, these findings suggested that identity style could not be regarded as independent from identity structure in attempts to elaborate a valid and comprehensive understanding of identity formation (Berzonsky, 1992a). Berzonsky (1992a) proposed a reciprocal relationship between processing orientation and identity structure whereby the style one uses influences the identity that one has, which

in turn, determines the process that is utilized. This conceptualization highlights the dynamic and evolving nature of the identity structure.

Social-Cognitive Correlates of Identity Style

Assuming that differences in identity processing style represent different approaches to self-construction, Berzonsky and Sullivan (1992; see also Berzonsky, 1993a) patterned their predictions about the social-cognitive aspects of identity style after the observed interrelationships between social-cognitive dispositions and identity status. As expected, findings revealed that an information-oriented style correlated significantly with a number of information-seeking and self-reflective variables. Specifically, the authors observed a relationship between an information-orientation and openness to experience (Costa & McCrae, 1978), a construct which depicts receptivity to new ideas, a willingness to consider alternate values, and an awareness of personal attitudes and feelings. In addition, they found a significant relationship between an informational style and need for cognition (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982), a concept referring to the extent to which individuals appreciate and are motivated to engage in active information processing as well as in cognitive activities involving alternative ideas. Information-oriented individuals were also characterized by introspective

tendencies (Hansell, Mechanic, & Brondolo, 1986) and a focus on their private self (Cheek & Briggs, 1982).

Berzonsky and Sullivan (1992) also observed that individuals employing a normative identity style were relatively rigid and narrowly focused; the normative orientation was negatively associated with experiential openness variables deemed to represent "core" areas of the self, including values, actions, and fantasies. Subsequently, they reasoned that these individuals might defensively close themselves off from experiences and information that might threaten or invalidate important self-views (Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992). Elsewhere, normative scores on identity style measures were found to be positively associated with a rigidly organized self-structure (Berzonsky & Neimeyer, 1988), a greater fear of negative evaluation (see Berzonsky, 1990), and a collectively defined identity (Berzonsky, in press). Additionally, individuals who reported adhering to this protectionistic and other-defined stance tended to endorse authoritarian values (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950) and thus can be distinguished by their social rigidity, intolerance of ambiguity, and lack of adaptability (Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992).

Use of a diffuse/avoidant style was positively correlated with a self-rated social identity emphasis as measured by the Cheek and Briggs' (1982) Aspects of Identity

Scale, lending support to the view that a diffuse processing orientation leads to an externally controlled approach to solving problems and negotiating identity issues (Berzonsky, 1991b) as well as greater reactivity to social evaluation (Berzonsky, in press). Other research found significant relationships between a diffuse/avoidant style and procrastination tendencies as well as other-directedness (see Berzonsky, 1990). Moreover, individuals with a diffuse/avoidant identity style scored lowest of all individuals on such information-seeking variables as introspectiveness, need for cognition, and experiential openness (Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992). These findings are consistent with the view of diffuse/avoidant individuals as both avoidant and motivated by self-presentational concerns to create the appropriate impression for immediate social approval, even if that means sacrificing long-term adaptation.

Berzonsky's Process View of Identity Formation

Based on the constructivist notion that a self-theory's effectiveness depends on its utility for anticipating and controlling life events (Kelly, 1955), Berzonsky's (1990) process conceptualization of identity suggests that optimal psychosocial adaptation will occur when individuals are effectively responsive to the self-relevant experiences they encounter in the course of daily life. In particular, maximally effective responses to identity-relevant

information should be associated with a balanced utilization of assimilative and accommodative processes. Perhaps most central to Berzonsky's (see Berzonsky, 1988; Berzonsky & Neimeyer, 1988) model is the hypothesis that individual differences in identity style should determine the extent to which individuals exercise this "dialectical interchange" when processing self-relevant information, especially information that disconfirms self-conceptions.

According to Berzonsky (1990), individuals who use both assimilative and accommodative processing should make dissonance-induced efforts to revise relevant aspects of the self when confronted with self-discrepant information. In contrast, individuals who characteristically favor assimilation over accommodation in their processing of self-relevant experiences should conserve self-views despite invalidation. This individual differences account of the identity negotiation process suggests interesting implications for Swann's (1987) self-verification formulation. Specifically, Berzonsky (1990) proposed that the tendency to engage in systematically biased processing in order to confirm self-conceptions may be moderated by the characteristic style that one utilizes to construct his or her identity. That is, differential reliance on self-verification strategies (Swann, 1987) and self-serving attributions (Ross, Lepper & Hubbard, 1975) when confronted

with identity-discrepant feedback should be a function of identity style.

Individual Differences in the Processing of Self-Discrepant Information

Research identifying the social-cognitive aspects of identity statuses and identity styles has enabled researchers to speculate about individual variability in the processing of self-discrepant information. However, no research has directly tested the impact of identity status or identity style on the evaluation and utilization of dissonant self-relevant information. The most relevant studies include those that have examined the relationship between identity status and integrative complexity in social interaction (Slugoski et al., 1984) and between identity style and stress management (Berzonsky 1989a, 1992a, 1992b). Perhaps the most applicable study is one that has examined the impact of self-consistent and self-discrepant autobiographical recollections on the self-conceptions of individuals who utilize different identity styles.

Identity Status and Integrative Complexity

A study conducted a decade ago by Slugoski et al. (1984) examined the cognitive and social characteristics of identity status. The authors used Marcia's (1966) Identity Status Interview to classify male college students according to identity status and had them complete the Paragraph Completion Test (PCT; Schroder, Driver, & Streufert, 1967), an instrument measuring integrative complexity relevant to

interpersonal interactions. They also categorized their interactive behavior using Bales (1951) Interaction Process Analysis system in a group situation involving moral problem-solving tasks.

Results revealed that differential personal and cognitive strategies for dealing with interpersonal feedback and its sources reflected differences in identity status. Foreclosures and diffusions showed impulsive decision styles and the need for immediate closure, indicating that these individuals defended against potential dissonance by maintaining constrictive cognitive systems. These low-identity statuses appeared to disregard or outright reject the feelings and opinions of others and exposed obvious signs of tension in the interactions. Moreover, the foreclosed structure, in particular, appeared to be supported by fairly distinctive interactional patterns. Foreclosed individuals tended to respond to potentially disconfirming information with either aggressive tactics such as interruptions, sarcasm, and condescension or more acquiescent techniques such as discounting and superficial agreement. Subjects even resorted to deflating the status of the source of information. Both of these types of responses, antagonistic and acquiescent, achieved the larger goal of closing off dissonant information that might induce the need for self-modification. The more advanced statuses, achieved and moratorium, produced PCT scores that indicated

cognitive flexibility and integrative complexity. Observations of their group behaviors revealed that they freely probed the opinions of other group members, demonstrated higher levels of empathy and support, and appeared comfortable discussing controversial issues.

Identity Styles and Coping with Stress

Berzonsky (1989a, 1992a, 1992b) recently extended his process model of identity development to explain dispositional differences in how individuals evaluate and attempt to cope with stressors. In his series of correlational studies, he conceptualized stressors as crises or anxiety-arousing situations that have the potential for invalidating or forcing revisions in individuals' self-views. He proposed that individual variability in identity style should be associated with differential utilization of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980, 1985; Lazarus, 1966). Specifically, he predicted that information-oriented individuals would perceive academic stress as manageable and engage in more problem-focused coping efforts such as seeking pertinent information, generating alternative solutions, and identifying potential stress-inducing factors in the environment and making the appropriate changes. In contrast, diffuse/avoidant and normative-oriented individuals were expected to engage in more emotion-focused coping, characterized by the utilization of defensive

tactics such as detachment, wishful thinking, and procrastination, all of which are aimed at dismissing the cause of the stress and restricting the experience of psychological tension (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980, 1985).

In a recent test of the hypothesized relationship between processing orientation and coping strategies (Berzonsky, 1992b), college students were administered the Identity Style Inventory (Berzonsky, 1989b), the Ways of Coping checklist (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985), and the Alpert and Haber (1960) measure of facilitative and debilitative test anxiety. In support of previous studies (Berzonsky, 1989a, 1992a), reported use of an information-oriented style was positively related to problem-focused and social-support-seeking coping efforts, as well as facilitative anxiety responses. Information-oriented individuals appeared to perceive stressors as manageable and actively considered information that might facilitate resolutions of problems.

Both diffuse/avoidant and normative styles, in contrast, were positively associated with emotion-focused coping strategies. By denying the problem or considering only fanciful solutions, these individuals dodged the immediate tension, but prevented long-term resolution by not confronting the problem directly. Additionally, normative-oriented individuals reported significantly more debilitative test anxiety than the other statuses. These

findings suggested that diffuse/avoidant and normative-oriented individuals preferred to ward off problems that had the potential to threaten their self-constructions.

Identity Styles and Autobiographical Memories

In a recent study, Neimeyer and Metzler (1992) examined identity style variability in the recall of self-discrepant autobiographical memories and the differential impact of these recollections on subsequent self-perceptions. They hypothesized that because identity styles presumably represent different approaches to the processing of self-relevant information these differences should be reflected in the relative ability or inability to generate personal memories that were discrepant from self-conceptions (Neimeyer & Rareshide, 1991). They also proposed that the impact of autobiographical recollections that confirm or disconfirm positive or negative self-perceptions should vary directly with identity style.

Specifically, Neimeyer and Metzler (1992) expected the memory recall of information-oriented individuals to represent a balanced array of experiences that were consistent and inconsistent with their self-beliefs. Furthermore, individuals with an information-oriented style were expected to be relatively more likely to revise their self-images to accommodate image-discrepant recollections. In sharp contrast, it was predicted that normative styles would recall mostly those events that were consonant with

their self-views and summon few, if any, discordant memories. Moreover, it was anticipated that they would respond very differently to identity-discrepant recollections, dismissing their informational value in an effort to protect existing self-constructions. The authors recognized that diffuse-oriented individuals' lack of identity exploration and absence of commitment made it more difficult to predict the nature (i.e., confirmatory versus disconfirmatory) of the memories that they would recall. Presumably, they would generate both types of memories and base the alteration of their self-constructions on the immediate demands of the situation or the perceived social rewards.

Findings revealed that the nature (i.e., self-consistent versus inconsistent) of autobiographical memories recalled and the impact of that recall on subsequent self-perceptions varied with identity processing orientation as expected. While information-oriented individuals generated significantly more confirmatory than disconfirmatory memories, they still managed to generate more than twice the number of self-discrepant memories than did normative oriented subjects. Normative-oriented individuals not only generated the least amount of invalidating memories but they also showed the least change, again emphasizing their preference for assimilation over accommodation. Consistent with their presumed lack of self-definition and tendency to

conform to social dictates, diffuse individuals generated the greatest balance in the number of consistent and inconsistent memories recalled and showed the most extreme changes in self-perceptions following recall of image-inconsistent memories.

The Present Research

The research reviewed in this paper thus far concerns the relationships between identity style or identity structure and the social-cognitive dimensions relative to evaluating self-discrepant information in personal and interpersonal domains, different modes of coping with identity-threatening stressors, and the recollection and impact of self-discrepant memories on self-evaluations. Taken together, these studies provide partial support for Berzonsky's (1990, 1992c) theory that variability in identity style should reflect differences in the processing and evaluation of self-discrepant feedback, as well as the degree to which such information should prompt a revision of the self-structure.

The present research was designed to extend these recent efforts by using an experimental paradigm to test directly whether individuals with different identity processing orientations are differentially responsive to self-discrepant information. The present study involved selecting individuals representing each of the three identity styles who perceived themselves as highly

egalitarian and then systematically disconfirming these self-perceptions with ego-discrepant feedback and measuring the ways in which they processed, evaluated, and utilized that information (see Methods for details). These considerations regarding the relationship between identity orientations and responses to self-discrepant information gave rise to the following hypotheses:

1. Individuals with an informational style should be relatively more willing than individuals utilizing the normative or diffuse identity styles to seek, evaluate, and utilize information that disconfirms their egalitarian self-views. They should demonstrate this by achieving a greater balance, relative to normative and diffuse/avoidant types, in their recall of self-consistent and self-inconsistent interpretive feedback as well as confirmatory and disconfirmatory personal experiences. In addition, informational types should show less bias in their recall of percentile scores provided to them in the disconfirming feedback condition. They also should demonstrate a relatively greater intrinsic interest in volunteering to take an additional personality test, and they should show a greater preference for receiving further feedback pertaining to egalitarianism after receiving disconfirming feedback on this attribute. Finally, these individuals should perceive the test as more credible and make fewer external attributions and more internal attributions for their test

performance than either the normative or diffuse individuals when they receive disconfirming feedback.

2. Individuals with a normative-oriented style should devote less deliberate effort to the elaboration and testing of self-invalidating information. They are expected to recall a greater proportion of identity-consistent (versus inconsistent) evaluative information and personal experiences, as well as make more self-serving errors in their recall of percentile score ratings than informational individuals. Further, they should express less intrinsic interest in taking an additional personality test after receiving disconfirming feedback. Normative individuals should also be less likely than informational types to request additional information on the disconfirmed attribute after receiving feedback that invalidates their self-beliefs. Finally, normative types should show a greater tendency than informational individuals to discredit the validity of the test and seek out self-confirmatory attributions for their test performance after receiving disconfirming feedback.

3. Individuals with a diffuse identity style are expected to be especially vigilant to social expectations and external contingencies. Given that the attribute on which they receive negative feedback, egalitarianism, is a strong social norm, these individuals should bias their attention away from recalling image-discrepant (i.e., anti-

egalitarian) information. They should be more likely than normative or informational types to recall interpretive feedback and personal experiences that are consistent with their egalitarian self-concepts. Moreover, diffuse individuals should be less intrinsically motivated, relative to the other individuals, to take an additional personality test and least likely to request additional feedback on egalitarianism because such information might further jeopardize the good impression that they have been trying to manage. In addition, these individuals should be just as likely as the normative types to question the validity of the test and make external attributions for their test performance after receiving identity-discrepant feedback, although the reasons for doing so might be different (i.e., they will be motivated to reinforce existing self-beliefs in order to gain social approval, whereas normative types will be motivated to avoid the internal dissonance associated with negatively discrepant feedback).

While shedding light on our understanding of individual variability in responses to self-relevant information, previous evaluations of Berzonsky's (1990) process model have been compromised by the exclusive use of correlational methodologies. The experimental design of the present study allows for a more thorough and controlled analysis of the tenets upon which Berzonsky's (1990) model is based and therefore affords more conclusive interpretations.

In addition, the present study enables some insight into the potential applications of Berzonsky's (1990) social-cognitive model of identity development. In particular, applications of these results to the areas of prejudice reduction, stress management, and therapeutic change are highlighted. In all these cases, individuals are in the position of encountering information or experiences that are discrepant from their current constructions of reality and that necessitate an alteration of self-beliefs in order to achieve optimal adaptation.

CHAPTER 3 METHODS

Design

The design of this study was a 3 (identity style: informational, normative, or diffuse/avoidant) x 2 (feedback: confirmatory or disconfirmatory feedback) x 2 (gender: male or female) between subjects factorial.¹

Participants

Berzonsky's (1989b) revised version of the Identity Style Inventory (ISI2) was administered as a questionnaire on "personal similarities" to a large sample (N = 758) of undergraduate students who had volunteered in exchange for experimental credit in their introductory psychology classes. This instrument yielded scores for each of the three identity styles (informational, normative,

¹ Berzonsky (1993a) has suggested that the oft-cited differential distribution of men and women among the identity style classifications may be due to different socialization patterns that may affect how individuals process self-relevant experiences. Although a recent correlational study has indicated that men and women with the same identity style do not differ along social-cognitive reasoning variables (e.g., need for cognition), gender was included in the present experimental design in order to evaluate whether men and women utilizing the same identity style differed in their responses to self-relevant information. Results revealed that gender did not interact with identity style on any of the dependent measures. Therefore, it will not be discussed further.

diffuse/avoidant) and a separate index of identity commitment (see Measures, below, and Appendix A).

Participants also completed a set of 5-point scales (0-4) that allowed them to rate themselves on three personal value dimensions: Honesty, Responsibility, and Egalitarianism. In addition, participants used a 5-point scale to rate the degree to which they considered each of these dimensions as important to their sense of self (see Measures, below, and Appendix B). A more comprehensive measure of egalitarianism, the Humanitarianism-Egalitarianism Scale (Katz & Hass, 1988), was also administered during pre-testing (see Measures, below, and Appendix C).

In order to be selected for participation in this experiment, individuals had to meet the following criteria. First, they had to score above the median on the Humanitarianism-Egalitarianism Scale (median = 29.29). Second, they had to score above the midpoint (i.e., ratings of 3 or 4) on the one-item measures of self-perceived egalitarianism, responsibility, and honesty. Third, they had to rate egalitarianism, responsibility, and honesty as highly important to their sense of self (i.e., ratings of 3 or 4). Those individuals who did not meet these requirements were excluded from participation. A total of 409 individuals from the larger sample were eligible (i.e., met the above criteria) for participation in this study.

When contacted by phone, 125 individuals (53 men and 72 women) elected to participate. This final sample (mean age = 19.5) consisted of 80% European Americans, 7% Asian Americans, 6% African Americans, 5% Hispanic Americans, and 2% Other. Of these individuals, 42 (22 men and 20 women) were identified by the ISI as informational, 41 (15 men and 26 women) as normative, and 42 (16 men and 26 women) as diffuse/avoidant.

Procedure

Each of the 125 participants was scheduled for an individual session. A cover story was used in order to enhance the credibility of the procedures and the feedback manipulation (see Appendix D). When the participants arrived at the experimental room they were told by a confederate that their session had been purposefully scheduled at the same time that a three-hour graduate seminar on psychological assessment for doctoral psychology students was meeting in another room. They were told that the class had spent the major part of the semester being trained in the administration, scoring, and interpretation of projective personality inventories, particularly the Rorschach, TAT, and DAP tests, and that they were soliciting the help of undergraduate students to practice their assessment skills under the direct supervision of their professor, a licensed clinical psychologist. The confederate then self-identified as a graduate student from

the assessment class whose role was to guide participants through the administration, scoring, and interpretation phases of a projective personality test. After this introduction, participants provided their informed consent for participation in this project (see Appendix E). The participants were assured on the consent form that their responses would be kept confidential by having a number substituted for their name.

Participants were then given verbal assurance of confidentiality and told that they would be taking the Draw-A-Person test. Individuals were then administered an adapted version of the Draw-A-Person picture test (Goodenough, 1926; see Appendix F for instructions). Participants were given five minutes to complete the first picture, and while they were completing a second picture, the confederate went to another room, designated the assessment classroom, and (unbeknownst to the participant) turned on a tape recording of several people discussing scoring-relevant issues before returning to the test administration room. When the participant finished the test, the confederate stated that they would take the completed test to the assessment classroom together. The participant was seated in the chair outside the classroom door while the confederate went into the classroom to ostensibly conduct the scoring with the rest of the class under their professor's supervision. The tape recording was

playing so that it could be overheard by the participant. After five minutes of discussion, a second tape recording played the sounds of a printer, ostensibly generating an analysis of the participant's drawings, and the confederate emerged from the room with printouts in hand.

The confederate and the participant then returned to the testing room for the test interpretation. At this time participants were told that an important part of any assessment procedure entailed the interpretation of scores to the participant. They were then prepared for the interpretation by reading along as the confederate spoke aloud (see Appendix G). As part of this preparation, the Draw-A-Person test was described as highly valid in order to enhance the believability of the feedback that they were about to receive.

The computer-printed interpretive analysis consisted of both a narrative description of the participant's performance and a line graph depicting actual percentile scores (see Appendix H). The analysis had been prepared in advance to communicate feedback that disconfirmed one-half of the participants' self-perceptions as egalitarian while confirming their self-perceptions as honest and responsible. Individuals in these conditions were told that they scored at the 28th percentile on egalitarianism and at the 90th and 89th percentile for the attributes of responsibility and honesty, respectively.

The other half of the participants served as the control conditions. Instead of getting disconfirmatory feedback on the egalitarian construct, they received uniformly consonant (i.e., confirmatory) feedback on all three value dimensions (i.e., honesty, responsibility, egalitarianism) that had been assessed as highly important and descriptive of them earlier in the semester. Individuals in these conditions were told that they scored at the 88th percentile on egalitarianism and at the 90th and 89th percentile for the attributes of responsibility and honesty, respectively. In all conditions, the attributes on which individuals received feedback were counterbalanced.

Following this manipulation of feedback (disconfirmation or confirmation), participants were told that it was always necessary for a psychologist working with an actual client to check with the client to see how the interpretation was understood. They were asked to recall as much as they could about the information they received during the interpretation and to record what they remembered on a sheet similar to a standard thought listing form (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982) (see Appendix I). In addition, they were asked to recall the percentile scores (i.e., 1-100%) that they had been given on each of the three dimensions (see Appendix J).

Participants were then told that it is not only important for a psychologist to get a feel for what a client

retains from the feedback interpretation, but that it is important to give the client a chance to communicate his or her perceptions of the accuracy or inaccuracy of the assessment analysis. The confederate stated that clinicians often ask their clients to think about the feedback and how it fits with their life experiences. The confederate then acknowledged out loud that everyone at some time or another, because of human nature, acts out the more favorable and less favorable aspects of their personality. Participants were asked to think about the interpretive feedback they received and whether or not it seemed to correspond with their thoughts and behaviors in actual life events. They were then instructed to recall experiences that either fit or did not fit with the interpretive feedback and to record these experiences using a sheet similar to a standard thought-listing form (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982, see Appendix K).

Participants were then asked to complete a short set of questions designed to assess their intrinsic and extrinsic interest in taking another assessment test. Participants were also asked to indicate which aspects of themselves might they be interested in receiving feedback about if they were to participate in another testing session. The egalitarian-nonegalitarian dimension was couched in a list of six dimensions (see Appendix L).

Finally, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire consisting of 17 questions pertaining to the perceived validity and reliability of the personality test, perceived expertise of the interpreter and accuracy of the interpretation, and perceptions of their test performance. Three additional items (items 9, 10, 11) assessed post-feedback self-evaluations. Three other items (items 21, 22, 23) were included to test the effectiveness of the feedback manipulation (see Appendix M).

Participants were then carefully and thoroughly debriefed. In addition to explaining the nature and purpose of the experiment, the experimenter emphasized that the "graduate student in the assessment class" was actually not in such a class and had not evaluated the personality measures. They were told that the scores and interpretation they received were prepared before they took the test and in no way reflected their actual performance on the inventory (see Appendix N). When it was clear that the participants were in no way adversely affected by the manipulation, they were thanked for their participation and dismissed.

Measures

Identity Style

The revised version of the Identity Style Inventory (ISI2; Berzonsky, 1989b) is a self-report measure used to assess identity style. The inventory was developed by uncoupling commitment and self-exploration components

contained in statements about identity status (see Adams, Bennion, & Huh, 1989). The ISI2 contains 39 statements which the participants rated on a Likert-type scale of 1 = not at all like me to 5 = very much like me and yields a score for each of the following: information-oriented style ("I've spent a good deal of time reading and talking to others about religious issues"), normative style ("I've always had purpose in my life; I was brought up to know what to strive for"), diffuse/avoidant style ("Many times by not concerning myself with personal problems, they work themselves out") and commitment ("I know what I want to do with my future").

Reported test-retest reliabilities for the individual scales of the ISI2, over a two-month interval, varied from .71 (diffuse) to .77 (commitment; Berzonsky 1989b). Alpha coefficients were .67 for information, .66 for normative, .78 for diffuse/avoidant, and .78 for commitment. Studies that have focused on the psychometric properties of the scales (e.g., Berzonsky 1989b, 1990, 1993a; Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992) cite evidence for the construct validity of the ISI2 subscales. For example, scores on the informational scale are correlated positively with openness to experience and need for cognition. Scores on the normative scale are positively associated with a rigidly organized self-structure and negatively associated with openness to experience. Scores on the diffuse/avoidant

scale are positively correlated with a self-rated social identity emphasis and negatively associated with introspectiveness. Evidence for criterion validity is provided by Neimeyer and Metzler (1992) who showed that identity processing orientation can predict differences in how individuals respond to identity-discrepant autobiographical memories.

In an attempt to classify the present sample according to identity processing orientation, the procedure recommended by Berzonsky (1992a) was employed. First, raw scores for the 409 individuals who completed the three identity style scales (and met the criteria for inclusion in the study) were transformed into standardized *z* scores, with means of 0 and standard deviations of 1. Then, an individual's highest score on the three style subscales was used to designate his or her identity style. This procedure made it possible to categorize all potential participants into one of the three identity processing orientations.

Value Dimensions

Participants' self-perceived ratings on three value dimensions, honesty, responsibility, and egalitarianism, as well as perceived self-importance of these dimensions were measured using a six item Likert-type 5-point scale. Brief descriptions of each of these dimensions were provided, and after each description, participants were asked to rate the degree to which they perceived the description as

characteristic of themselves and to rate the degree to which this characteristic was important to their sense of self. Honesty was described as being sincere, truthful, and trustworthy. Responsibility was described as being dependable, reliable, and conscientious. Egalitarian was described as adhering to democratic ideals of equality, social justice, and concern for others' well-being. This scale was constructed for the present study. Therefore, there is no existing validity or reliability information.

Egalitarianism

The Humanitarianism-Egalitarianism Scale (HE; Katz & Hass, 1988) is a 10-item scale designed to assess an egalitarian value orientation. Participants rated on a Likert-type scale of 0 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree on items such as "Everyone should have an equal chance and an equal say in most things" and "In dealing with criminals, the courts should recognize that many are victims of circumstances." Coefficient alpha for the 10 items was .84, indicating that the instrument has adequate internal consistency. Test-retest reliability information as well as evidence for convergent and discriminant validity was not available.

Dependent Measures

Participants were asked to recall the evaluative feedback that they had received as well as personal experiences relevant to that feedback. Two independent

raters coded each piece of information and each experience as being relevant to either the egalitarianism, responsibility, or honesty dimensions. Raters also judged whether the information or experience recalled was consistent or inconsistent with the feedback. In cases where a disagreement existed, a third independent rater was used to evaluate the information and experiences under question and a majority (i.e., 2/3) vote was used. An inspection of the data revealed that individuals rarely recalled evaluative information that was inconsistent with the actual feedback (i.e., the recall of self-consistent information in the disconfirming feedback conditions or self-discrepant information in the confirming feedback conditions). Thus, the quantity of feedback-consistent information recalled relevant to the egalitarian attribute served as a dependent measure.

Regarding the recall of personal experiences, individuals recalled virtually no identity-discrepant experiences in the confirming feedback conditions. However, identity consistent experiences were recalled in the disconfirming conditions (i.e., participants recalled identity-consistent experiences when they received disconfirming feedback). Thus, the amount of feedback-consistent egalitarian experiences as well as the number of positive egalitarian experiences served as dependent measures.

Participants indicated the percentile score (1-100%) that they received for each of the three dimensions (i.e., honesty, responsibility, egalitarianism) during the interpretive feedback session. Participants also indicated their interest in receiving additional test feedback by responding to two questions; one question assessed their interest without any mention of compensation and the other assessed their interest after mentioning the contingency of receiving extra credit in their psychology course. If they stated an interest in either of these conditions, they were given the opportunity to indicate the psychosocial dimensions about which they would like to receive feedback.

In addition, participants responded to 17 questions designed to assess attributions for their performance on the personality test. For example, participants were asked how much effort they put into taking the DAP test and how responsible for their performance were factors outside of their own personality and effort. In addition, three questions asked how discrepant the feedback on each of the three dimensions was from their self-perceptions. Three extra questions required the participants to state their beliefs about how egalitarian, honest, and responsible they are, irrespective of their test scores on each of the dimensions.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The dependent measures for the present research consisted of the manipulation check and those measures that assessed the ways in which individuals process, evaluate, and utilize self-discrepant information.

Manipulation Check

The results demonstrate that the feedback manipulation was highly effective in producing the desired effect. Responses to a question asking how discrepant the egalitarian feedback was from participants' self-perceptions were subjected to a 3 (identity style: informational, normative, or diffuse) x 2 (feedback: confirming or disconfirming) x 2 (gender: male or female) between subjects analysis of variance. The analysis revealed only the predicted main effect of feedback, $F(1, 83) = 73.38, p < .001$. As expected, those participants who received disconfirming (anti-egalitarian) feedback said the feedback was significantly more discrepant from their self-conceptions ($M = 4.71$) than did those who received confirming (pro-egalitarian) feedback ($M = 2.21$).

Further evidence of the effectiveness of the manipulation check was demonstrated by showing that self-perceptions of egalitarianism changed after the feedback was

given. Results from a 3 (identity style: informational, normative, or diffuse) x 2 (feedback: confirming or disconfirming) x 2 (gender: male or female) between subjects analysis of variance on post-feedback self-evaluations revealed that individuals who received disconfirming feedback evidenced self-perceptions that were less egalitarian ($M = 4.87$) than individuals who received confirming feedback ($M = 6.02$), $F(1, 113) = 39.64$, $p < .0001$. No other main effects or interactions were found.

Processing of Self-Discrepant Information

Individual variability in the processing of self-discrepant information was examined by assessing the ways in which identity style influenced the recall of evaluative information and relevant personal experiences following feedback that disconfirmed or confirmed existing self-perceptions. The specific dependent measures relevant to the processing of self-relevant information included: a) the amount of feedback-consistent egalitarian information recalled (i.e., the recall of pro-egalitarian information in the confirming feedback condition or anti-egalitarian information in the disconfirming feedback condition); b) the discrepancy between the actual percentile ratings on the egalitarian dimension and the recall of those ratings; c) the number of feedback-consistent egalitarian experiences recalled (i.e., the recall of pro-egalitarian experiences in the confirming feedback condition or anti-egalitarian

experiences in the disconfirming feedback condition); and d) the total number of positive egalitarian experiences recalled (i.e., the number of pro-egalitarian experiences recalled by individuals in both the confirming and disconfirming conditions).

Interjudge Agreement

On a randomly selected sample of 414 pieces of evaluative information recalled, the percentage of interrater agreement was 93% for the classification of the information as belonging to a given dimension (i.e., egalitarianism, responsibility, or honesty), and 99% for whether the information was consistent or inconsistent with the feedback. On a sample of 361 personal experiences recalled, the percentage of interrater agreement was 91% for the classification of the experience as relevant to a given dimension, and 98% for whether the experience fit or didn't fit with the feedback.

Recall of Evaluative Information

It was hypothesized that individuals with an informational style would recall more self-discrepant information than normative or diffuse/avoidant individuals when they received disconfirming feedback. Additionally, it was predicted that information-oriented individuals would demonstrate a more balanced recall of self-consistent and self-inconsistent evaluative information, relative to normative and diffuse/avoidant individuals. Both normative

and diffuse/avoidant individuals were expected to recall more identity-consistent than identity-discrepant information.

In order to test this hypothesis, the number of feedback-consistent pieces of egalitarian information recalled was submitted to a 3 (identity style: informational, normative, or diffuse) x 2 (feedback: confirming or disconfirming) x 2 (gender: male or female) between subjects analysis of variance. This analysis revealed no significant main effects or interactions involving the independent variables (p 's > .10), indicating that the amount of feedback-consistent information recalled did not vary as a function of identity style or feedback. Contrary to expectations, individuals utilizing different identity styles did not differ in the amount of self-discrepant information they recalled following the receipt of disconfirming feedback. Also surprising was the observation that identity style did influence the preferential recall of identity-consistent over identity-inconsistent information.

Score Recall

Individuals with an informational orientation were expected to recall identity-discrepant percentile scores with more accuracy than individuals with either a normative or diffuse/avoidant approach to identity development. Normative and diffuse/avoidant types were expected to

demonstrate a more pronounced confirmatory bias in their recall of negatively discrepant percentile scores. A 3 (identity style: informational, normative, or diffuse) x 2 (feedback: confirming or disconfirming) x 2 (gender: male or female) between subjects analysis of variance conducted on discrepancy scores revealed only a marginally significant main effect of feedback, $F(1, 113) = 3.79, p = .05$. In fitting with the literature on confirmatory bias (e.g., Swann, 1987), a trend of responses emerged whereby participants tended to make relatively more positively-biased errors in their recall of percentile scores that contradicted their self-evaluations ($M = -2.14$) relative to those that confirmed their self-perceptions ($M = .11$). Unexpectedly, individual variability in identity style did not moderate this effect of feedback on the accuracy with which percentile scores were recalled. This finding indicates that individuals utilizing all three processing modes were equally likely to engage in self-verification when recalling feedback scores that contradicted their self-evaluations.

Recall of Feedback-Consistent Personal Experiences

Individuals with an informational orientation to the identity negotiation process were expected to recall significantly more personal experiences relevant to the negatively discrepant feedback than individuals utilizing a normative or diffuse/avoidant style. Moreover, the personal

recollections of information-oriented individuals were expected to reflect a greater balance of identity-congruent and identity-incongruent experiences relative to the recollections of normative and diffuse/avoidant individuals. It was predicted that individuals with normative and diffuse/avoidant processing styles would bias their recall of personal experiences such that they would recall more experiences that would serve to validate their self-perceptions than invalidate them.

The number of feedback-consistent egalitarian experiences recalled was submitted to a 3 (identity style: informational, normative, or diffuse) x 2 (feedback: confirming or disconfirming) x 2 (gender: male or female) between subjects analysis of variance. The analysis yielded a main effect of feedback, $F(1, 113) = 12.86$, $p < .01$, and a marginally significant feedback X identity style interaction, $F(2, 113) = 2.89$, $p < .06$. Confirming feedback induced individuals to recall disproportionately more pro-egalitarian experiences than the number of anti-egalitarian experiences recalled following disconfirming feedback.

Unexpectedly, the simple effect of identity style was not significant under the disconfirming feedback conditions, $F(2, 60) = 1.57$, $p > .21$, indicating that individuals did not differentially recall image-discrepant personal experiences as a function of their identity style. The means for the marginally significant feedback X identity

style interaction on recall of personal experiences are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Number of feedback-consistent egalitarian experiences recalled as a function of identity style and feedback

<u>Feedback</u>	<u>Identity Style</u>		
	<u>Information</u>	<u>Normative</u>	<u>Diffuse</u>
Confirm	1.45	1.79	2.23 _a
Disconfirm	1.05	1.18	.60 _b

 Note. Means with different subscripts differ significantly at $p < .05$ following a significant simple effects test.

Viewing the marginally significant interaction differently revealed a simple effect of feedback that was significant only for those participants with a diffuse identity style, $F(1, 40) = 17.71$, $p < .01$. Diffuse individuals were more likely to recall pro-egalitarian experiences following feedback that confirmed their egalitarian self-image than they were to recall anti-egalitarian experiences following feedback that disconfirmed their egalitarian self-image. The simple effect of feedback was not significant for those participants with a normative, $F(1, 39) = 1.83$, $p > .18$, or informational identity style, $F(1, 40) = 1.37$, $p > .25$, indicating that informational and normative participants were just as likely to recall experiences that disconfirmed their self-image as experiences that confirmed their self-image.

As predicted, the greatest balance in the recall of image-consistent and image-discrepant experiences occurred among information-oriented individuals (they recalled only .40 more image-consistent than image-discrepant experiences, compared to normative types at .61). Thus, although there were no apparent differences among them in the recall of self-discrepant experiences, individuals using different identity processing styles did show a pattern of responses indicating that they differed somewhat in the extent to which they attended to and sought out evidence that confirmed their self-beliefs, relative to that which disconfirmed their self-beliefs.

Recall of Positively Egalitarian Personal Experiences

It was hypothesized that individuals with normative and diffuse/avoidant identity styles would recall significantly more positively egalitarian experiences than informational individuals in both the confirming and disconfirming conditions. The overall number of positive experiences recalled relevant to egalitarianism was analyzed using a 3 (identity style: informational, normative, or diffuse) x 2 (feedback: confirming or disconfirming) x 2 (gender: male or female) between subjects analysis of variance. No main effects or interactions of the independent variables were obtained (p 's > .20), thus refuting the hypothesis that diffuse/avoidant and normative-oriented individuals would recall significantly more positively egalitarian (i.e.,

identity-confirming) experiences than informational individuals, regardless of the type of feedback they were provided.

Evaluation of Self-Discrepant Information

Regarding the evaluation of evaluative information, individuals rated the perceived credibility of the test and responded to questions that assessed attributions for their test performance. The scales that were used to assess these perceptions and attributions were derived by subjecting the 17 questionnaire items to a principal components factor analysis. On inspection of the scree plot as well as an "eigenvalue > 1" criterion, three factors were retained and submitted to a varimax rotation. The results of the factor analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Factor loadings for the three factor solution of the perception questionnaire items

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Interest in test	<u>.66</u>	-.03	.25
Effort required	<u>.56</u>	.34	-.23
Person at best	<u>.38</u>	-.16	.01
Personal responsibility	<u>.64</u>	-.06	.10
Importance to self	<u>.53</u>	-.07	.17
Validity of test	<u>-.68</u>	.06	-.29
Influence of external factors	.19	<u>.62</u>	-.24
Influence of artistic ability	.08	<u>.57</u>	-.06
Clarity of scoring guidelines	.22	<u>-.48</u>	.11
Comfort taking test	.42	<u>-.60</u>	-.21
Difficulty of test	-.12	<u>.64</u>	.07
Reliability of test	.32	-.16	<u>.55</u>
Accuracy of interpreter	.03	.01	<u>-.52</u>
Accuracy of interpretation	.10	.02	<u>.73</u>
Sensitivity of interpreter	.30	-.11	<u>.69</u>

Note. Factor loadings that are underlined are > .38.

Three items loaded greater than .38 on more than one factor. However, the item assessing degree of comfort taking the test loaded predominately on one factor. Therefore, this item was retained. Two other items, those assessing comfort receiving feedback and perceived expertise of the interpreter loaded approximately the same on two factors, and therefore, these two items were deleted.

Factor 1 was labelled Internal, and reflected attributions residing within the individual for his or her test performance (e.g., How personally responsible do you feel for your performance on the DAP test?). Factor 2 was labelled External, and reflected factors outside the person that may have influenced test performance (e.g., How responsible were factors outside of your own personality and effort for your performance on the DAP test?). Factor 3 was labelled Test and reflected perceptions of credibility regarding the test and test interpreter (e.g., If you were to take a different test measuring the same aspects of your personality, do you think you would do about the same?). Therefore, the dependent measures relevant to the evaluation of self-relevant information included: a) the scores on the internal dimension; b) the scores on the external dimension; and c) the scores on the test dimension.

Internal Attributions for Test Performance

It was anticipated that the self-reflective individuals utilizing an informational style would be more likely than

normative or diffuse/avoidant individuals to attribute causes for unfavorable feedback to characteristics of themselves. Scores on the internal factor were submitted to a 3 (identity style: informational, normative, or diffuse) x 2 (feedback: confirming or disconfirming) x 2 (gender: male or female) between subjects analysis of variance. No main effects or interactions of the independent variables were obtained (p 's > .13). Contrary to predictions, individuals who differed by identity style did not exhibit differential tendencies toward making internal attributions for identity-disconfirming feedback (p 's > .30).

External Attributions for Test Performance

It was hypothesized that diffuse/avoidant and normative-oriented individuals, presumably operating from self-presentational and defensive postures, respectively, would be more likely than informational individuals to externalize the cause for negatively discrepant test feedback. A 3 (identity style: informational, normative, or diffuse) x 2 (feedback: confirming or disconfirming) x 2 (gender: male or female) between subjects analysis of variance was used to analyze scores on the external factor. As with the internal factor, no main effects or interactions of the independent variables were obtained (p 's > .16). Thus, contrary to expectations, individuals with a diffuse/avoidant or normative identity orientation were no more likely than individuals using an informational approach

to ascribe causality for identity-threatening test feedback to factors residing outside of themselves.

Perceptions of the Test

It was hypothesized that information-oriented individuals would evaluate the test on which they received feedback as well as the source of feedback as significantly more credible relative to normative or diffuse/avoidant individuals. The scores for the test factor were analyzed using a 3 (identity style: informational, normative, or diffuse) x 2 (feedback: confirming or disconfirming) x 2 (gender: male or female) between subjects analysis of variance. The analysis revealed only a main effect of feedback for the test factor, $F(1, 113) = 12.21, p < .01$. In support of previously documented findings (e.g., Crary, 1966; Markus, 1977; Shrauger & Lund, 1975), participants who received disconfirming feedback rated the test and test interpreter as less credible ($M = 4.58$) than did participants who received confirming feedback ($M = 5.08$). No other main effects or interactions were significant on the test factor scale (p 's $> .18$). Surprisingly, the use of a diffuse/avoidant or normative processing orientation did not augment self-serving tendencies as expected. Instead, individuals utilizing all three of the identity styles appeared equally likely to discount the credibility of identity-discrepant information.

Utilization of Self-Discrepant Information

Responding to discrepant feedback about the self involves more than simply attending to and evaluating it. Individuals must also decide how they will use the information to motivate their subsequent actions and alter (or confirm) their self-constructions (Shrauger, 1975). The dependent measures relevant to the utilization of self-discrepant information involved assessments of: a) the extent to which these individuals were intrinsically motivated by the information to take an additional personality test; b) whether or not they requested additional information specific to the egalitarianism dimension; and c) their post-feedback self-evaluations of how egalitarian they are.

Intrinsic Interest in Taking Another Personality Test

It was predicted that self-exploratory, information-oriented individuals would be more intrinsically interested, relative to normative and diffuse/avoidant individuals, in taking another personality test. Moreover, it was anticipated that levels of intrinsic interest in taking another test would be highest among informational individuals, relative to other individuals, when feedback was contrary to self-perceptions.

A 3 (identity style: informational, normative, or diffuse) x 2 (feedback: confirming or disconfirming) x 2 (gender: male or female) between subjects analysis of

variance was used to examine the scores on the intrinsic interest scale. Results yielded a main effect of identity style, $F(2, 113) = 3.70$, $p < .05$, and although a significant feedback X gender interaction emerged, $F(1, 113) = 6.06$, $p < .05$, identity style did not interact with these variables.

As expected, those participants with an informational identity style expressed the greatest degree of intrinsic interest ($M = 5.43$), followed by those with normative ($M = 5.05$) and diffuse ($M = 4.59$) identity styles. Information-oriented individuals evidenced significantly greater intrinsic interest than diffuse individuals, $F(1, 122) = 5.17$, $p < .05$, with the normative types not differing from either the informational or diffuse participants. However, when informational, normative, and diffuse individuals were compared on the degree of intrinsic interest they demonstrated following identity-discrepant feedback there were no significant differences (p 's $> .15$). This latter finding is at odds with the hypothesis that information-oriented individuals would be more intrinsically stimulated by identity-discrepant feedback to take an additional personality test.

Request for Additional Evaluative Information on Egalitarianism

Information-oriented individuals were hypothesized to be more likely than either normative or diffuse/avoidant individuals to request additional information pertaining to egalitarianism after feedback contradicted their egalitarian

self-perceptions. A chi-square analysis was conducted comparing the percentage of participants who chose to receive feedback on the egalitarian dimension following confirming and disconfirming feedback. The chi-square analysis was significant for informational types, $\chi^2(1) = 9.72$, $p < .01$, but not for normative, $\chi^2(1) = 1.15$, $p > .28$, or diffuse types, $\chi^2(1) = 2.35$, $p > .12$. When information-oriented participants received confirming feedback, only 22% selected to receive additional information about the egalitarian dimension. However, when information-oriented participants received disconfirming feedback, 78% chose to receive additional evaluative information on the egalitarian dimension.

As expected, information-oriented individuals were more likely to seek out additional information about themselves relevant to egalitarianism when feedback challenged their self-conceptions than when it did not. The nature of the feedback did not make a significant difference in the selection of egalitarian feedback for normative and diffuse individuals. However, an interesting, although nonsignificant, pattern of responses suggested that individuals utilizing normative and diffuse styles were especially likely to choose egalitarian-relevant information after their self-beliefs were confirmed but reject additional egalitarian-relevant information after their self-concepts were threatened.

Post-Feedback Ratings of Egalitarianism

One long-standing interest among researchers examining the effects of self-relevant feedback is how individuals use such feedback to modify their self-beliefs (see Swann, 1987). It was hypothesized that information-oriented individuals would be more likely than diffuse/avoidant or normative-oriented individuals to lower their self-ratings of egalitarianism following negatively discrepant feedback. A 3 (identity style: informational, normative, or diffuse) x 2 (feedback: confirming or disconfirming) x 2 (gender: male or female) between subjects analysis of variance was conducted on post-feedback self-evaluations on the egalitarianism dimension. Contrary to expectations, identity style did not moderate the influence of the feedback effect already discussed (see the Manipulation Check section). Thus, an informational style was no more likely than the other two modes of processing to facilitate accommodative shifts in self-views in response to identity-discrepant feedback.

A post-hoc analysis was conducted in order to identify any possible indirect influence that self-relevant feedback could have exerted on self-evaluations. A simultaneous multiple regression was used to examine whether the relationship between the number of identity-consistent or identity-inconsistent personal recollections that participants generated and their self-ratings of

egalitarianism was greater for individuals with particular identity styles. This regression analysis was conducted separately for individuals with informational, normative, and diffuse/avoidant identity styles. For each regression the egalitarian self-rating was the criterion measure, and the predictors were type of feedback, the number of feedback-consistent experiences recalled, and the interaction between type of feedback and the number of feedback-consistent experiences recalled.

The regression for the diffuse/avoidant participants revealed no significant effects of the predictors on self-ratings of egalitarianism. The regression for those individuals with a normative orientation revealed only a significant effect of feedback, $F(1, 37) = 4.33$, $p < .05$. Normative participants rated themselves as more egalitarian following confirming feedback ($M = 6.00$) than following disconfirming feedback ($M = 4.59$).

The regression for those participants using an informational identity style revealed a significant effect of the interaction between type of feedback and the number of feedback-consistent egalitarian experiences recalled on self-ratings of egalitarianism, $F(1, 38) = 6.34$, $p < .02$. Simple effect tests showed that when informational types received confirming feedback, there was no relationship between the number of positively-egalitarian experiences recalled and self-ratings of egalitarianism, $t(19) = .37$,

$p > .37$. However, when informational types received disconfirming feedback, the greater the number of negative egalitarian experiences recalled, the lower their ratings of egalitarianism, $t(19) = -2.76$, $p < .02$. These results suggest that information-oriented individuals who reflect on personal experiences that verify self-discrepant information may be more likely to revise their egalitarian self-conceptions to incorporate this information.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

The discussion of the present research will be divided into the following sections: (a) a discussion of the influence of identity style on the processing, evaluation, and utilization of confirming and disconfirming self-relevant information, (b) the implications of the results for Berzonsky's (1990) process model of identity development (c) potential applications of Berzonsky's (1990) model, taking into account the present results, (d) limitations of the present research, and (e) conclusions.

Processing, Evaluation, and Utilization of Self-Discrepant Information

In his process model of identity development, Berzonsky (1990) proposed that stylistic differences in the construction and reconstruction of the self should determine distinctly different responses to self-discrepant information. The present study examined how individual differences in identity style influenced the processing, evaluation, and utilization of information that either confirmed or disconfirmed an important belief about the self.

Processing of Self-Discrepant Information

The present section discusses those results that are relevant to the processing of dissonant evaluative information about the self. The literature on self-verification has provided strong evidence that people are more attentive to and recall more self-confirmatory information than self-discrepant information (Crary, 1966; Swann, 1987; Swann & Read, 1981a, 1981b). Drawing from Berzonsky's (1990) proposal that individual differences in the use of self-serving strategies should be a function of one's identity style, it was hypothesized that the preferential recall of self-confirmatory over self-discrepant evaluative information and personal experiences would be strongest for diffuse/avoidant and normative individuals and weakest for informational individuals.

Surprisingly, individuals using normative and diffuse/avoidant identity processing orientations were not more likely than information-oriented individuals to recall information that validated their egalitarian self-concepts nor were they more likely to bias their recall of negatively discrepant evaluative feedback in order to make it consistent with initial self-perceptions of egalitarianism (Shrauger, 1975). Oddly enough, feedback itself did not affect the amount of confirming versus disconfirming information recalled, a finding that is at odds with most of the literature (e.g., Crary, 1966; Swann & Read, 1981b).

These observations indicated the possibility that factors inherent in the experimental paradigm itself may have minimized the impact of both feedback and style differences. It is worth noting that the procedure of this study left little room for recall bias in that it called for the presentation of highly credible feedback by a highly credible source followed immediately by the recall of that information. Although feedback did have a marginal effect on the accuracy with which percentile scores were recalled, this finding may very well be an artifact of the greater likelihood of error with the recall of continuous numerical ratings than discrete narrative elements.

Although the interaction between feedback and identity style achieved marginal significance for the recall of personal experiences, individuals utilizing different identity styles did not differentially recall personal experiences that disconfirmed their egalitarian self-images. This finding contradicted Berzonsky's (1990) proposal that differences among individuals utilizing the various identity orientations should be reflected in the extent to which they engage self-serving biases when processing information that challenges existing self-constructions.

Nevertheless, this marginally significant interaction between feedback and identity style on the recollection of personal experiences did reveal an interesting trend of results suggesting that identity style may play some role in

differentially guiding the elaboration and testing of identity-consistent versus inconsistent information. In particular, individuals utilizing a diffuse/avoidant approach to identity formation recalled somewhat more identity-consistent experiences following confirming feedback than identity-discrepant experiences following disconfirming feedback. That is, these individuals recalled personal experiences that served to maintain a socially desirable self-image and suppressed potentially incriminating personal recollections. Given the recent evidence that diffuse/avoidant individuals are especially motivated to strive for social approval and validation (Berzonsky, 1994) it is not surprising that they would refrain from attending to or elaborating on information that could potentially discredit a socially-reinforced egalitarian image.

This pattern of findings also suggested that information-oriented individuals, unlike diffuse/avoidant types, did not bias their recollection of personal experiences in order to maintain an egalitarian self-image. Rather, informational individuals were just as likely to recall identity-discrepant experiences following disconfirming feedback as identity-congruent experiences following confirming feedback. This unbiased examination of both identity confirming and disconfirming personal experiences provides some support for the depiction of

informational types as introspective and willing to explore aspects of their self-identity in response to self-relevant feedback, even when it calls into question a valued self-image (Berzonsky, 1990; 1993a).

Contrary to expectation, normative-oriented individuals also appeared to be indiscriminate in their recall of identity-consistent and identity-discrepant personal experiences. However, it is worth noting that the discrepancy in recall of self-consistent and self-discrepant experiences was slightly larger, although not significantly so, for the normative types than for the information-oriented individuals. Nevertheless, given the strong evidence suggesting that normative individuals would defensively reject potentially invalidating information, this finding suggests that researchers need to more clearly specify the conditions under which these individuals would presumably prefer self-serving, defensive maneuvers over unbiased self-exploration (Berzonsky, 1993a).

Evaluation of Self-Discrepant Information

The following section addresses those results relevant to how individuals utilizing the three styles of self-construction evaluated information that confirmed or disconfirmed important aspects of their identities. Diffuse/avoidant individuals were expected to be especially motivated to avoid the negative social ramifications of being identified as non-egalitarian by employing self-

handicapping attributions for unfavorable test feedback and making self-serving assessments of the test's validity. Individuals with a normative orientation were expected to use similar strategies to rigorously defend their self-views, but for different reasons. Presumably, normative individuals would engage this self-serving bias in order to ward off the internal dissonance that might arise if their internalized prescriptions were invalidated (Berzonsky, 1990). Finally, it was predicted that information-oriented individuals would appreciate the potential implications of both validating and invalidating information for their developing sense of self and therefore make fewer strategic attempts to discredit the test or rationalize their performance when feedback challenged their self-conceptions.

Quite unexpectedly, identity processing style did not affect perceptions of test validity. Participants with all three identity styles were equally likely to ascribe less credibility to the assessment measure, as well as the source of feedback, after receiving information that was discrepant with their egalitarian self-image (Crary, 1966; Markus, 1977; Shrauger & Lund, 1975). This finding suggests that information-oriented individuals are not immune to the preservation of the self through self-serving assessments of image-discrepant feedback. At least one other study (Berzonsky & Kinney, 1994b) has demonstrated that informational types may deny or distort reality when

threatened with potentially invalidating feedback about the self.

Surprisingly, the tendency to make internal versus external attributions for test performance was independent of both information processing style and feedback. Contrary to previous findings (see Swann, 1987), individuals receiving negative feedback were not more likely than those receiving positive feedback to assign causality for the feedback to external factors. As discussed in the limitations section, the tendency to make self-serving attributions may have been muted in the disconfirming conditions as a result of receiving identity-confirming feedback on two out of three attributes and then assessing causality for all of the evaluative feedback together, rather than independently for each attribute.

Utilization of Self-Discrepant Information

Responding to contradictory feedback about the self entails not only evaluating the information, but also deciding how to use the feedback to revise (or maintain) self-evaluations, as well as determine one's level of motivation for subsequent action relevant to the feedback (Shrauger, 1975). Presumably motivated to seek information and experiences that will facilitate the development of a more effective self-theory, individuals with an informational orientation were expected to respond to disconfirming feedback with requests for additional self-

relevant information, as well as an openness to self-reconstruction. In contrast, it was predicted that normative individuals would defensively dismiss opportunities to elaborate on identity-threatening feedback or consider revisions in their self-structure. Finally, it was expected that diffuse/avoidant individuals, relying on an external orientation and lacking firm internal commitments, would be motivated by the threat of social rejection to conserve their egalitarian self-constructions and reject any potentially incriminating information.

Seeking additional information. Regardless of the feedback they received, information-oriented individuals expressed the greatest intrinsic motivation to seek out additional self-relevant information, with diffuse/avoidant individuals showing the least intrinsic interest and normative types scoring in the middle, not differing significantly from either of the other two. This finding supports the results of previous studies demonstrating that need for cognition and openness to experience are positively associated with an informational style and negatively related to a diffuse/avoidant orientation (Berzonsky, 1993a; Berzonsky and Sullivan, 1992). However, the observation that normative individuals showed as much intrinsic interest in seeking out additional self-relevant feedback as informational types refutes previous findings that depict individuals with a normative orientation as closed to

information that may challenge important aspects of the self (Berzonsky, 1990; Berzonsky, 1993a; Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992).

As expected, individuals using an informational style showed a greater tendency to seek additional information specific to the egalitarianism dimension following feedback that disconfirmed this important attribute than following feedback that confirmed this attribute. These results provide some validation for Berzonsky's (1990) depiction of informational types as generally skeptical about their self-constructions and open to self-relevant information. Self-discrepant feedback, in particular, stimulated information-oriented individuals to seek additional information, presumably in order to clarify the implications of the feedback for their self-development.

In contrast, the nature of the feedback did not influence the extent to which normative and diffuse/avoidant individuals chose to receive additional information on the egalitarianism dimension. Interestingly, however, individuals relying on these two approaches showed a pattern of responses directly opposite to that of information-oriented individuals; diffuse/avoidant and normative individuals were more likely to request additional egalitarian information after receiving confirming feedback than after receiving disconfirming feedback. This pattern of responses for normative and diffuse/avoidant individuals

is better understood in light of the results from a study by Swann and Read (1981a) in which individuals reported that they could learn more about themselves by examining self-confirmatory information as compared with self-disconfirmatory information. It is possible that normative and diffuse/avoidant individuals may regard information that confirms their self-conceptions as more diagnostic than information that disconfirms their self-conceptions and therefore seek out the former over the latter.

Revising the self. Because self-appraisal is important in determining subsequent behavior (Swann, 1987), it was necessary to assess individual differences in the willingness to revise self-perceptions in response to self-discrepant feedback. Informational types were expected to be more open, relative to the other identity styles, to accommodating their self-views in light of dissonant feedback (Berzonsky, 1990). Contrary to expectations, although informational individuals evidenced lower egalitarian self-ratings following disconfirming feedback than confirming feedback, individuals with normative and diffuse/avoidant identity orientations were just as likely to demonstrate this modification in self-perceptions.

Although differences in identity style did not directly moderate the effect of feedback on self-ratings as expected, it was considered important to identify any indirect ways in which identity style influenced individuals' self-

evaluations following self-discrepant information. Drawing from Neimeyer and Metzler's (1992) observation that autobiographical recollections influenced self-evaluations, post hoc analyses were used to determine if the number of identity-discrepant personal experiences recalled following disconfirming feedback was positively related to lower self-ratings of egalitarianism. Results indicated that this relationship existed, but only for information-oriented individuals. Thus, individuals who took an informational approach to identity development not only actively explored personal experiences that threatened their valued self-image, but they also used these personal recollections to further substantiate the need to revise their self-constructions.

In contrast, the post-feedback self-ratings of normative and diffuse/avoidant individuals were independent of their personal recollections, indicating that the changes they evidenced in self-ratings were probably not a function of personal examination. Rather, the changes observed among these individuals may have been more a function of the highly structured situation in which they were unable to influence or resist the feedback that they received. This reasoning is supported by studies showing that laboratory investigations of self-change may not be generalizable to naturalistic settings because they do not afford the opportunities that individuals ordinarily enjoy to resist

self-discrepant feedback (see Swann, 1987 for a review). Moreover, given that their self-changes were not preceded by personal examination, it is likely that the changes made by the diffuse/avoidant and normative individuals may not only be situationally induced but short-lived, as well.

Implications of the Results for Berzonsky's Process Model of Identity Development

The process of self-definition has been conceptualized as a life-long process reflecting a continuous examination and re-examination of one's values, beliefs, goals, and other identity-relevant issues (Berzonsky, 1990; Erikson, 1975). Berzonsky (1989a; 1990) theorized that individuals exhibit characteristic differences in the ways in which they approach or manage to avoid this identity negotiation process. Moreover, it was presumed that these stylistic differences would be most apparent when individuals encounter information or experiences that necessitate a revision of the existing self-structure (Berzonsky, 1990).

The results of the present study reveal that Berzonsky's (1990) primary assumption is not upheld under experimental scrutiny; individuals utilizing different identity styles were not differentially responsive to self-discrepant information. Given that Berzonsky's (1990) predictions in this regard were based solely on correlational evidence, further experimentation is necessary to clarify the role of identity style in negotiating

information that disconfirms significant aspects of the self.

These results do provide limited evidence indicating that individuals with different identity styles may be differentially responsive to confirming versus disconfirming self-relevant information. An examination of the findings relevant to each identity style highlights the potential contributions of this work to our understanding of the different ways in which each style directs the negotiation of identity-consistent versus identity-inconsistent information and experiences.

Information-Oriented Style

Information-oriented individuals showed evidence of processing identity-relevant information in such a way to preserve aspects of the existing self-structure even while they remained open to self-elaboration and reconstruction. On the one hand, adding credence to observations that virtually all individuals will employ self-serving biases (Greenwald, 1980; Taylor & Brown, 1988), informational individuals were not immune to making self-serving attributions and evaluations to justify unfavorable feedback and biasing their recall of identity-discrepant feedback to make it more consistent with their self-conceptions.

On the other hand, these individuals were also the most intrinsically motivated of all individuals to learn more about themselves after receiving self-relevant feedback.

Identity-discrepant information, as compared to identity-consistent information, seemed especially likely to stir informational individuals' skepticism regarding their self-constructions and stimulate them to engage in deliberate self-exploration and actively seek out new information (Berzonsky, 1990). For example, they responded to self-discrepant feedback with requests for additional evaluative information relevant to the threatened attribute, with the presumed purpose of this information search being to help them clarify the implications of the inconsistent feedback for their developing sense of self. Importantly, although all individuals responded to identity-discrepant information with changes in their self-conceptions, informational individuals were the only ones who appeared to reorganize the way in which they viewed themselves based on an examination of their own personal experiences relative to their existing convictions.

These findings provide some indication that, when confronted with identity-relevant information, information-oriented individuals may remain tentative about their self-constructions and willing to test and revise their self-views as needed in order to maximize effective adaptation (Berzonsky, 1990). Their willingness to seek further information and deploy accommodative processing strategies in the face of self-discrepant information is consistent with correlational evidence showing that information-

oriented individuals are introspective, open to experience, and have a high need for cognition (Berzonsky, 1993a; Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992).

Diffuse/Avoidant Style

Diffuse/avoidant individuals were initially characterized in the literature (Berzonsky, 1989a, 1989b, 1990) as taking a passive approach to identity construction. In keeping with this description, the diffuse/avoidant types in the present study expressed the least intrinsic interest in learning more about themselves. However, rather than a style marked by passivity or confusion as originally proposed, the present study helps to verify more recent depictions of diffuse/avoidant types as motivated to operate in a strategic, self-serving manner intended to maintain impressions for social approval (Berzonsky, 1994).

After receiving identity-consistent feedback, individuals with a diffuse/avoidant orientation called to mind past actions and experiences that served to reinforce socially-approved beliefs about the self, whereas they dismissed personal recollections that might lend credence to contradictory, and therefore potentially incriminating, information. These individuals' steadfast self-views of egalitarianism led them to recall personal experiences that would encourage the maintenance of these socially desirable self-beliefs, a finding that highlights one way in which self-conceptions exert a powerful channelling influence on

information-processing (for a review, see Higgins & Bargh, 1987). Thus, the present study provides some corroborating evidence for the assumption that, rather than being directed by internal commitments and convictions, diffuse/avoidant individuals seem to be motivated primarily by past or anticipated social consequences to preserve their existing self-constructions (Berzonsky, 1990).

In addition to theorizing that diffuse/avoidant individuals would deal with self-discrepant information by displaying defensive avoidance and strategic social monitoring, it was also proposed that diffuse/avoidant types would be especially likely to use self-serving attributions to rationalize unfavorable personality feedback (Berzonsky & Ferrari, 1994a). While the diffuse/avoidant individuals in this study were more likely to denigrate the validity of the test and make external attributions for their test performance after received disconfirming feedback, as compared to confirming feedback, they were no more likely than individuals with a normative or informational orientation to rely on these self-serving strategies.

These results provide little support for Berzonsky's (1990) original depiction of diffuse/avoidant individuals as "ad hoc" self-theorists whose approach to identity construction is primarily passive and accommodative. Rather, the present findings provide some evidence in support of Berzonsky's (1994) most recent depictions of

diffuse/avoidant individuals as motivated to use self-serving strategies that will help them create or maintain the impression of possessing socially desirable attributes. However, while most of their responses to self-relevant information suggested a tendency to verify socially appropriate self-conceptions (Swann, 1987), others did not, indicating that diffuse/avoidant individuals may only be "strategic" when they feel that they can get away with it.

Normative Style

Perhaps the most theoretically and empirically inconsistent findings were observed among those individuals who utilized a normative approach to identity negotiation. According to Berzonsky (1990), normative types, presumably protective of the constructions they have borrowed from close others and significant referent groups, should have been especially motivated to dismiss identity-discrepant feedback in a defensive effort to preserve their extant self-perceptions. However, the present study showed no evidence that distinguished normative individuals as employing uniformly defensive, self-protective strategies. In fact, the only support for the prediction that normative types would be closed to information that threatened hard-core areas of the self, such as important values (Berzonsky, 1990), was a nonsignificant pattern showing that they tended to reject additional information pertaining to egalitarianism once this attribute was threatened.

Individuals using a normative processing orientation were no more likely than individuals relying on the other identity styles to bias their recall of negatively discrepant feedback or defensively blame unflattering test feedback on external factors. Furthermore, normative individuals were just as likely to recall personal experiences that contradicted their self-conceptions as those which confirmed them. Just as perplexing was the finding that normative individuals expressed a level of intrinsic interest in receiving additional evaluative feedback that was not significantly different from that of informational individuals.

These results are interesting in light of previous inconsistent findings involving normative types. For example, several recent studies have demonstrated that individuals with a normative style use both favorable and unfavorable coping mechanisms (Berzonsky, 1992a; 1992b) and both adaptive and maladaptive defense mechanisms (Berzonsky & Kinney, 1994b) when responding to stressful events. Moreover, at least one other study (Berzonsky, 1993a) has proposed that the defensiveness of normative individuals may be more situation-specific and not a generalized reaction like that of diffuse/avoidant types.

These findings, together with the results from the present study, clearly challenge Berzonsky's (1990) depiction of normative-oriented individuals as especially

threatened by and closed off to information that has the potential to invalidate important self-views. At the very least, Berzonsky's (1990) model needs to more clearly specify the conditions under which normative individuals prefer self-serving, defensive maneuvers over unbiased self-exploration and revision.

It is possible that the unexpected findings in the present study could be a function of normative individuals in the disconfirming conditions selectively attending to the identity-consistent feedback on the responsibility and honesty dimensions. However, this possibility seems unlikely considering that normative individuals in the disconfirming conditions recalled dissonant personal experiences relevant to egalitarianism, indicating that they were at least somewhat responsive to the discrepant feedback on the egalitarian dimension.

Potential Applications of the Present Results

Individuals encounter self-relevant experiences everyday. The manner in which individuals negotiate life's experiences, especially those which challenge existing constructions of reality, has an impact on their ability to adapt optimally in the environments in which they live (Berzonsky, 1990). The present section entertains the potential applications of the present results for three areas in which the successful negotiation of self-relevant information may be crucial.

Stress Management

Referring to Berzonsky's (1992a) definition of stress as encountering a pressure to change in an undesired way, one can see how the present results are immediately applicable to the area of stress management. Applying his process interpretation of identity development to the area of stress management, Berzonsky (1992a; 1992b) proposed that dispositional differences in identity style would influence the ways in which individuals interpret and attempt to cope with stressors. Using correlational methodologies, Berzonsky (1992b) found evidence to support his hypothesis that information-oriented individuals would confront stressors with problem-focused, adaptive coping strategies whereas diffuse/avoidant individuals would deal with stressors by avoiding problem-relevant information and engaging more emotion-focused, less effective strategies. Normative individuals relied primarily on maladaptive coping mechanisms but showed some tendencies toward healthier coping skills, such as social support seeking (Berzonsky, 1992b).

The results of the present experimental study provide some additional evidence to support suppositions that the informational style may be marked by more adaptive and effective psychological functioning. According to the findings of this study, individuals with an informational orientation are likely to respond to stressful events, or

events which challenge existing constructions, by gathering problem-relevant information, calling to mind relevant experiences from the past, and accommodating to change as needed without sacrificing a stable self-structure.

In an interesting extension of this research on the influence of identity style on modes of coping, Dusek and Berzonsky (1993) examined whether processing styles interact with event characteristics to determine how individuals manage stress. Interestingly, the results of that study showed that identity style was related to different optimal means of processing specific types of stressful events. For example, an informational style was preferred when dealing with undesirable events for which individuals perceived themselves as responsible (e.g., academic problems), perhaps because they could be most effective at directly altering the relationship between themselves and the stressor. An experimental investigation of the relationship between identity style and type of stressor should be the next step in this line of research.

Discrepancy and Therapeutic Change

There are also implications of these results for identifying client factors that might facilitate the change process in counseling. Following the lead of cognitive and behavior change theories (e.g., cognitive dissonance theory, attribution theory) which proposed that encounters with information and experiences that do not fit current

constructions of reality are a necessary condition for change, research has revealed that communicating discrepant ideas to clients may be a necessary condition for successful counseling outcomes (Claiborn, 1982; Strong, 1968; Strong & Claiborn, 1982). Kelly (1955) foreshadowed this theme some forty years ago with his advice that therapists could effect desired change by bringing alternative frames of reference to bear on clients' constructions of the meanings of personal and interpersonal issues related to their difficulties.

Discrepant ideas are introduced in the counseling process in the form of questions, reflections, interpretations, counselor self-disclosures, confrontations, personal feedback, and test interpretations (see Strong, Welsh, Corcoran, & Hoyt, 1992). However, these types of interventions threaten clients' constructions of reality and may be experienced negatively, stimulating clients to terminate the therapy relationship instead of changing (Strong, et al., 1992). Systematic investigations of interpretive discrepancy have attempted to determine the factors involved in successfully managing these interventions. Thus far, research has focused on the degree of discrepancy between the feedback and the client's conceptions, the timing of introducing discrepancy within the treatment process, and the content of the discrepancy (see Strong et al., 1992). However, what clients contribute

may be at least as important as these factors in determining whether they accept discrepant feedback and make desired changes.

The results of the present study indicate that the characteristic manner by which individuals deal with identity questions and decisions may predict their willingness to examine and incorporate discrepant interpretations into their self-constructions. For example, even though information that confirms their self-views may be more immediately appealing, information-oriented individuals may be likely to remain open to alternative ways of perceiving personal and interpersonal problems, conflicts, and decisions because of the greater adaptability that this flexible approach affords them. In sharp contrast, diffuse/avoidant individuals may avoid dealing with the discrepant feedback and eventually terminate therapy altogether or dismiss the potential long-term implications of the discrepant feedback by making short-term changes that will gain approval from the therapist or others. Normative individuals may examine information and experiences but fall back on internalized prescriptions when dealing with self-relevant information.

Prejudice Reduction

The present study also suggests implications of these results for identifying individual differences in the willingness to evaluate information relevant to personal

belief systems that maintain prejudice. Essed (1991) has recently argued that the importance of the egalitarian value system to Anglo-Americans' self-concepts has perpetuated the denial of racism because people have co-opted this value structure without critically examining their stereotypic attitudes and prejudiced beliefs. The fact that participants in this research reported that they espoused egalitarian values and that these values were very significant to their self-identity makes the results of this study immediately applicable to the literature on prejudice.

Results from the present study revealed some evidence indicating that identity style may differentially enable and disable the seeking out and evaluation of self-discrepant information, the personal exploration of actions and experiences relevant to one's egalitarian self-image, and the acceptance of feedback that is negatively discrepant from one's egalitarian self-views. In particular, individuals with an informational orientation to identity construction appeared to operate from a self-determined perspective within which conflicting sources of information could be evaluated and integrated. These individuals' willingness to test and revise aspects of their self-identity when confronted with dissonant feedback suggests that they might be more inclined to examine their personal convictions of egalitarianism and recognize discrepancies

between them and their prejudiced attitudes and actions, the first step in confronting prejudice (Rokeach, 1973).

The diffuse/avoidant individuals in the present study, presumably driven by social incentives to maintain appropriate impressions, seemed to more rigidly adhere to their egalitarian self-beliefs and to insulate themselves from information that threatened to invalidate these critical self-views. Such tendencies are especially likely to inhibit the awareness and reduction of racial bias (Essed, 1991; Frey & Gaertner, 1986; Katz & Hass, 1988; McConahay, 1986). The normative processing style, while not especially open to potentially invalidating information, did not appear to be marked by overriding tendencies toward self-preservation either. It is possible that these individuals may carefully monitor threats to their egalitarian identity and respond according to the extent of the perceived threat.

Overall, these findings suggest that appealing to the ways in which people think rather than concentrating on the content of what they think may be a successful approach to prejudice reduction. For example, rather than training individuals in what may be perceived as "politically correct" forms of language and communication, it may be more effective to encourage divergent, open, exploratory, and integrative ways of thinking about and processing information and experiences relevant to oneself and others.

Rather than learning mere tolerance of others for the sake of social approval, this practice may lead to an internalized desire to accept and appreciate one's own culture as well as those that are different. Of course, a direct investigation of the impact of this type of training on prejudiced attitudes is necessary in order to derive any firm conclusions.

Limitations of the Present Research

Having discussed the results and the theoretical implications and potential applications of the present research, it is also necessary to address the limitations of this work. The present study involves delivering feedback that is either consistent or negatively discrepant from self-conceptions. Given that Berzonsky (1990) did not specify what type of disconfirming information would augment stylistic differences, it is possible that positively discrepant feedback (i.e., feedback that disconfirms negative conceptions of the self) may produce results that are more consistent with Berzonsky's (1990) proposal. Thus, this study would have benefitted from a design that included informational valence.

In the present study, participants in the confirming feedback conditions received uniformly positive feedback on all three dimensions, whereas participants in the disconfirming conditions were provided with identity-consistent feedback on the responsibility and honesty

dimensions and identity-discrepant feedback on the egalitarian dimension. This manner of providing feedback was chosen in order to enhance the credibility of the bogus egalitarian information in the disconfirming conditions (Snyder et al., 1977). However, receiving negatively discrepant feedback on only one attribute may have muted the effects of the disconfirming feedback because individuals in those conditions may have attended to the consistent feedback. A clearer picture of the results and perhaps stronger support for Berzonsky's (1990) individual differences model may have been achieved had a less conservative identity-threatening manipulation, such as uniformly disconfirming feedback, been provided. In another vein, providing individuals with ambiguous feedback (i.e., a balance of confirming and disconfirming feedback) may have allowed for a more judicious assessment of individual tendencies toward confirmatory bias.

Another potential problem with this study involves the possibility that the findings may be attributable to social desirability factors rather than individual differences in identity style. The use of a social desirability measure would have allowed the experimenter to examine the extent to which individuals endorse and defend egalitarian values for social desirability reasons.

Regarding problems relative to the dependent measures, the test perception and attribution questionnaire items were

constructed such that they collapsed across all three feedback dimensions (i.e., egalitarianism, honesty, and responsibility), yielding a general evaluation of the feedback and making it impossible to discern how feedback relevant to each particular attribute was evaluated. Thus, in the disconfirming condition, where mixed (i.e., positive and negative) feedback was delivered, it was not possible to know for sure whether the individuals were responding to the self-consistent or self-discrepant information, or both, when they recorded their evaluations.

This study could have benefitted from other additional assessments, as well. It would have been helpful to have had questions designed to assess individuals' motivations for responding to self-relevant feedback the way that they did. Although the evidence gathered thus far in this line of research suggests that informational individuals are motivated to seek information in an attempt to better understand themselves, it is impossible to make this conclusion given the findings that are available. It is possible that informational individuals requested additional evaluative feedback in the hopes that the new information would validate their preexisting self-beliefs. In addition, this study could have benefitted from questions designed to assess the processes that mediated the influence of self-discrepant feedback on self-ratings. These questions are left for future research.

Procedural factors may also have contributed to some of the equivocal findings in this study. Optimally, assessments of individuals' perceptions and attributions relevant to the evaluative feedback would have been made immediately after the information was received. However, in the interim between the time the feedback was received and the evaluations were made, individuals were given the task of recalling the evaluative information, making recollections of personal experiences, and indicating their interest in additional information. This time lag may have served to dissipate individuals' defensiveness, and therefore, decrease any tendencies to make self-serving attributions and evaluations.

Conclusions

Clearly, the results of the present study compromise Berzonsky's (1990) assumption that individual variability in identity style should predict distinctly different responses to identity-discrepant information. However, these results do afford some greater understanding of the ways in which each identity style differentially drives the interpretation and integration of the self-relevant experiences that individuals encounter, depending upon whether those experiences have the potential to validate or invalidate the self.

Additional experimental research is needed in order to make definitive conclusions regarding the similarities and

differences in how individuals utilizing different identity styles process, evaluate, and utilize self-relevant information. Importantly, the present study provides an experimental paradigm that will be useful in this regard. It will also be important to test Berzonsky's (1990) model outside the laboratory. This type of investigation would clarify the role of identity style in enabling or disabling an individual's ability to make sense of personal experiences, make useful predictions, and adequately adapt and cope with the environment while still retaining some sense of self-consistency over time and situations (Berzonsky, 1993b). Finally, a necessary direction for future work in this area includes a longitudinal examination of the stylistic patterns through which individuals interpret self-relevant information and redefine the self, beginning with the early years and extending through adulthood.

APPENDIX A
IDENTITY STYLE INVENTORY

Read each of the following statements carefully, then use it to describe yourself. On the answer sheet, bubble in the number which indicates the extent to which you think the statement represents you. There are no right or wrong answers. For instance, if the statement is very much like you, mark a 4; if it is not like you at all, mark a 0. Use the 0 to 4 scale below to indicate the degree to which you think each statement is uncharacteristic (0) or characteristic (4) of yourself.

0-----1-----2-----3-----4	
NOT AT ALL	VERY MUCH
LIKE ME	LIKE ME

1. Regarding religious beliefs, I know basically what I believe and don't believe.
2. I've spent a great deal of time thinking seriously about what I should do with my life.
3. I'm not really sure what I'm doing in school; I guess things will work themselves out.
4. I've more-or-less always operated according to the values with which I was brought up.
5. I've spent a good deal of time reading and talking to others about religious ideas.

6. When I discuss an issue with someone, I try to assume their point of view and see the problem from their perspective.
7. I know what I want to do with my future.
8. It doesn't pay to worry about values in advance; I decide things as they happen.
9. I'm not really sure what I believe about religion.
10. I've always had purpose in my life; I was brought up to know what to strive for.
11. I'm not sure which values I really hold.
12. I have some consistent political views; I have a definite stand on where the government and country should be headed.
13. Many times by not concerning myself with personal problems, they work themselves out.
14. I'm not sure what I want to do in the future.
15. I'm really into my major; it's the academic area that is right for me.
16. I've spent a lot of time reading and trying to make some sense out of political issues.
17. I'm not really thinking about my future now; it's still a long way off.
18. I've spent a lot of time and talked to a lot of people trying to develop a set of values that make sense to me.
19. Regarding religion, I've always known what I believe and don't believe; I never really had any serious doubts.

20. I'm not sure what I should major in (or change to).
21. I've known since high school that I was going to college and what I was going to major in.
22. I have a definite set of values that I use in order to make personal decisions.
23. I think it's better to have a firm set of beliefs than to be openminded.
24. When I have to make a decision, I try to wait as long as possible in order to see what will happen.
25. When I have a personal problem, I try to analyze the situation in order to understand it.
26. I find it's best to rely on the advice of a professional (e.g., clergy, doctor, lawyer) when I have problems.
27. It's best for me not to take life too seriously; I just try to enjoy it.
28. I think it's better to have fixed values than to consider alternative value systems.
29. I try not to think about or deal with problems as long as I can.
30. I find that personal problems often turn out to be interesting challenges.
31. I try to avoid personal situations that will require me to think a lot and deal with them on my own.
32. Once I know the correct way to handle a problem, I prefer to stick with it.

33. When I have to make a decision, I like to spend a lot of time thinking about my options.
34. I prefer to deal with situations where I can rely on social norms and standards.
35. I like to have the responsibility for handling problems in my life that require me to think on my own.
36. Sometimes I refuse to believe a problem will happen, and things manage to work themselves out.
37. When making important decisions, I like to have as much information as possible.
38. When I know a situation is going to cause me stress, I try to avoid it.
39. To live a complete life, I think people need to get emotionally involved and commit themselves to specific values and ideals.

APPENDIX B
VALUE DIMENSIONS

Consider the following values: egalitarianism, responsibility, and honesty. Below, please indicate two things about each of these values. First, indicate how characteristic each of these is of you. Second, indicate how important each of these values is to you personally.

A. Egalitarianism emphasizes adherence to democratic ideals of equality, social justice, and concern for others' well-being.

1. How characteristic is this of you?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4

NOT AT ALL

VERY MUCH

LIKE ME

LIKE ME

2. How important is this to you personally?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4

NOT AT ALL

VERY

IMPORTANT

IMPORTANT

B. Responsibility emphasizes being dependable, reliable, and conscientious.

1. How characteristic is this of you?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4

NOT AT ALL

VERY MUCH

LIKE ME

LIKE ME

2. How important is this to you personally?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4

NOT AT ALL

VERY

IMPORTANT

IMPORTANT

C. Honesty emphasizes being sincere, truthful, and trustworthy.

1. How characteristic is this of you?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4

NOT AT ALL

VERY MUCH

LIKE ME

LIKE ME

2. How important is this to you personally?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4

NOT AT ALL

VERY

IMPORTANT

IMPORTANT

APPENDIX C
HUMANITARIANISM-EGALITARIANISM SCALE

Read each of the following statements carefully. On the answer sheet, bubble in the number which indicates the extent to which you disagree or agree with each statement. There are no right or wrong answers. For instance, if you strongly agree with the statement, mark a four; if you strongly disagree mark a zero. Use the 0 to 4 point scale below to indicate the degree to which you disagree or agree with each statement.

0-----1-----2-----3-----4	
STRONGLY	STRONGLY
DISAGREE	AGREE

1. One should be kind to all people.
2. One should find ways to help others less fortunate than oneself.
3. A person should be concerned about the well-being of others.
4. There should be equality for everyone -- because we are all human beings.
5. Those who are unable to provide for their basic needs should be helped by others.
6. A good society is one in which people feel responsible for one another.

7. Everyone should have an equal chance and an equal say in most things.
8. Acting to protect the rights and interests of other members of the community is a major obligation for all persons.
9. In dealing with criminals, the courts should recognize that many are victims of their circumstances.
10. Prosperous nations have a moral obligation to share some of their wealth with poor nations.

APPENDIX D COVER STORY

We have purposely scheduled your session during the meeting time of a three-hour graduate seminar on psychological assessment. This class is a required course that is attended by doctoral students in psychology. Last year we began eliciting help from students like yourselves in order to practice and become more proficient with our assessment skills before we have to give these tests to clients.

Our class has spent the major part of this semester being trained in the administration, scoring, and interpretation of projective personality inventories. We have been formally trained in the use of the Rorschach, TAT, and DAP tests. Now we are involved in actually administering the tests to students under the supervision of our professor, a licensed clinical psychologist with a specialization in psychological assessment.

You will be involved in taking a test that will be scored by doctoral trainees under a psychologist's supervision, and the results will then be interpreted to you.

APPENDIX E
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Name: _____ Bar Code: _____
Telephone: _____ Age: _____ Gender: _____
Project Title: Psychological Assessment
Principle Coordinator: Margaret A. Moore, M.A.
Supervisor: Greg J. Neimeyer, Ph.D., Licensed Psychologist
Office: 235B PSY Phone: 392-0601

I understand that I will be completing a personality test and that I will receive an interpretation of my performance on the test. I also understand that I will be asked to fill out questionnaires regarding my thoughts about the information that I receive. I understand that I do not have to answer any question that I do not want to. I understand that my responses will be kept confidential by having a number substituted for my name following the completion of the session. I understand that I will receive 2 experimental credits, and that the time I spend here will be approximately 1 hour.

Any questions I may have about the procedure will be answered by the coordinator. I realize that I am free to discontinue participation at any time without repercussion. I have read and I understand the above information. I agree to participate in the procedure.

Participant

Date

Coordinator

Date

APPENDIX F
DRAW-A-PERSON TEST ADMINISTRATION INSTRUCTIONS

Thank you for helping us out today by being a participant in our assessment procedures. First, I want to assure you of complete confidentiality. It is within the ethical code of all psychologists to protect the confidentiality of clients, and we adhere to these ethical guidelines when working with students. When your test is scored, those doing the analysis will see only an identification number which will be put on your test in order to keep the test materials organized. Your name will never be connected with your test materials.

Today you will be taking the Draw-A-Person test, otherwise known as the DAP (confederate gives pencils and eraser to participant and holds sheet of paper up in front of him or her). I would like you to draw a picture of a person, an entire person. Do not draw just part of a person or a stick figure person (confederate gives the participant approximately five minutes to draw a person). Now I would like you to draw another person, but this time someone of the opposite sex from that which you have already drawn (confederate allows participant five minutes to draw another person). Now that you have completed the test we will take it to the assessment class where we will do the analysis.

APPENDIX G PREPARATION FOR INTERPRETATION OF TEST SCORES

As an introduction to the interpretation of test scores, there are several things that are important to convey to you. I have written these down so that I do not leave anything out.

1. Psychological tests enable psychologists to measure and predict personal characteristics and human behaviors. Some tests rely on explicit verbal questions and self-report answers - these are called objective tests. Projective tests, as you probably observed, are less structured and rely on personal reactions to ambiguous instructions or visual stimuli. The DAP is a type of projective test because your drawings are not constrained by a preselected format of questions. The DAP is a type of projective test because your drawings are not constrained by a preselected format of questions.

2. The DAP is based on the premise that we can predict certain personality patterns and behaviors from a drawing of a human figure. In other words, you illustrate your attitudes and feelings toward life and society in general through your drawing just as artists sketch a glimpse of their traits and attitudes and personality strengths and weaknesses in their paintings.

3. The drawing itself may be a conscious expression of these feelings, or these feelings may be deeply disguised and expressed unconsciously. In the process of creating these figures, the pencil is guided by conscious and unconscious forces asking for expression. While test takers sometimes attempt to express an ideal self rather than the real self, both are likely to be revealed in the drawing.

4. Each aspect of your drawing tells a great deal about your adaptation in the environment, your self-perception, your psychological conflicts and your style of dealing with others. Thus, the DAP can be used to tap into a wide variety of psychological characteristics.

5. Many studies have provided evidence for the validity of the DAP and scores are generally consistent between different raters. The accuracy of your test interpretation has been verified by a licensed clinician. However, it is always important to check findings against other tests, as no single sign is conclusive evidence of anything.

6. Because of our time limitation, today's scoring and interpretation has been limited to three particular psychological characteristics.

APPENDIX H
INTERPRETIVE FEEDBACK

Draw-A-Person Test

Profile Report for:

Egalitarianism - Your score on the component of the DAP which measures responsibility places you in the 88th percentile. This means that 88% of individuals receiving scores on this part of the test scored below you and that 12% of individuals receiving scores on this part of the test scored above you.

Your score on this component of the DAP is indicative of someone who values fairness and justice. Overall, your scores suggest a positive, accepting, and tolerant orientation toward others, even if they are different from yourself. You appear concerned for the welfare of all humans and this fundamental concern may allow you to perceive more similarities than differences when interacting with others. Moreover, it appears as if your tendency is to lessen gaps and harmonize with others rather than try to dominate and control them.

Responsibility - Your score on the component of the DAP which measures responsibility places you in the 90th percentile. This means that 90% of individuals receiving scores on this part of the test scored below you and that

10% of individuals receiving scores on this part of the test scored above you.

Your score on this component of the DAP indicates that you value dependability in both yourself and others. In your relationships, others are likely to see you as capable of being relied on and as someone who is accountable for your actions. Others trust that you will keep your word because you have demonstrated your reliability. You tend to act responsibly and conscientiously when you take on a commitment, and when you have a plan for something you stick to it. Your competence and effectiveness are all the more apparent because of your determination to carry through with your obligations.

Honesty - Your score on the component of the DAP which measures honesty places you in the 89th percentile. This means that 89% of individuals receiving scores on this part of the test scored below you and that 11% of individuals receiving scores on this part of the test scored above you.

Your score on this component indicates that you value genuineness and have great respect for human integrity. You tend to be sincere in your relationships and try not to promise things you can't fulfill. You seem to be the kind of person who is not afraid to speak freely, and you are likely to present yourself completely and honestly to others. Most of the friends you make will tend to view you as loyal and truthful and respect you for seeking truth in

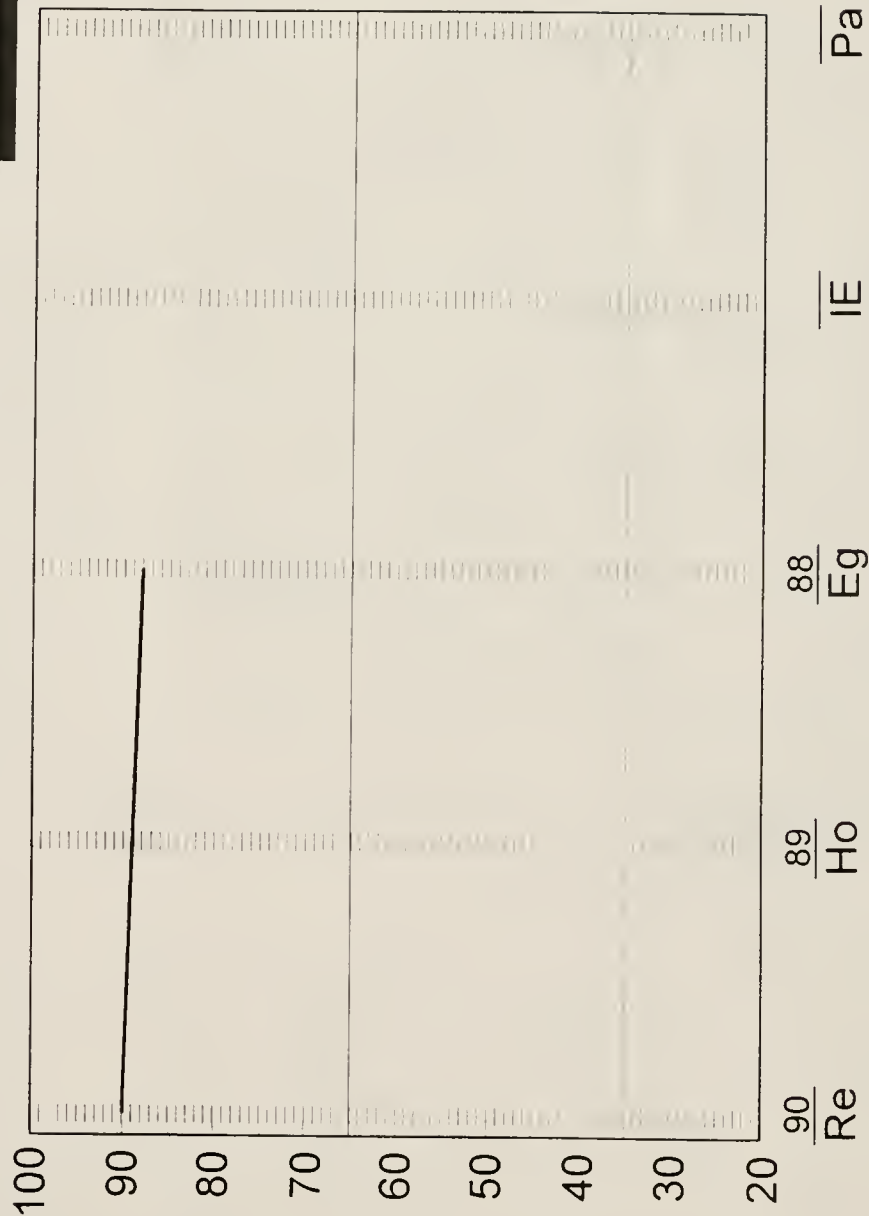
others. Although you may not succeed at times, you strive to uphold high standards.

Draw-A-Person Profile Sheet[®]

Name _____ Age _____ Sex _____

Clinical Scales

Re = Responsibility
Ho = Honesty
Eg = Egalitarian
IE = Introversion/Extroversion
Pa = Passive Aggressive



INTERPRETIVE FEEDBACK

Draw-A-Person Test**Profile Report for:**

Egalitarianism - Your score on the component of the DAP which measures egalitarianism places you in the 28th percentile. This means that 28% of individuals receiving scores on this part of the test scored below you and that 72% of individuals receiving scores on this part of the test scored above you.

Your score on this component of the DAP indicates that you tend to value principles of fairness and justice but that you have a difficult time translating these principles into attitudes and actions. Your tendency to see more differences than similarities when interacting with others makes it difficult to fully accept those who are different from yourself. You may hide negative attitudes and feelings so that you appear accepting and tolerant. While you may make an effort to treat people in an equal and just manner, your actual tendency may be toward maintaining hierarchies and gaps between people rather than harmonizing with them.

Responsibility - Your score on the component of the DAP which measures responsibility places you in the 90th percentile. This means that 90% of individuals receiving scores on this part of the test scored below you and that 10% of individuals receiving scores on this part of the test scored above you.

Your score on this component of the DAP indicates that you value dependability in both yourself and others. In your relationships, others are likely to see you as capable of being relied on and as someone who is accountable for your actions. Others trust that you will keep your word because you have demonstrated your reliability. You tend to act responsibly and conscientiously when you take on a commitment, and when you have a plan for something you stick to it. Your competence and effectiveness are all the more apparent because of your determination to carry through with your obligations.

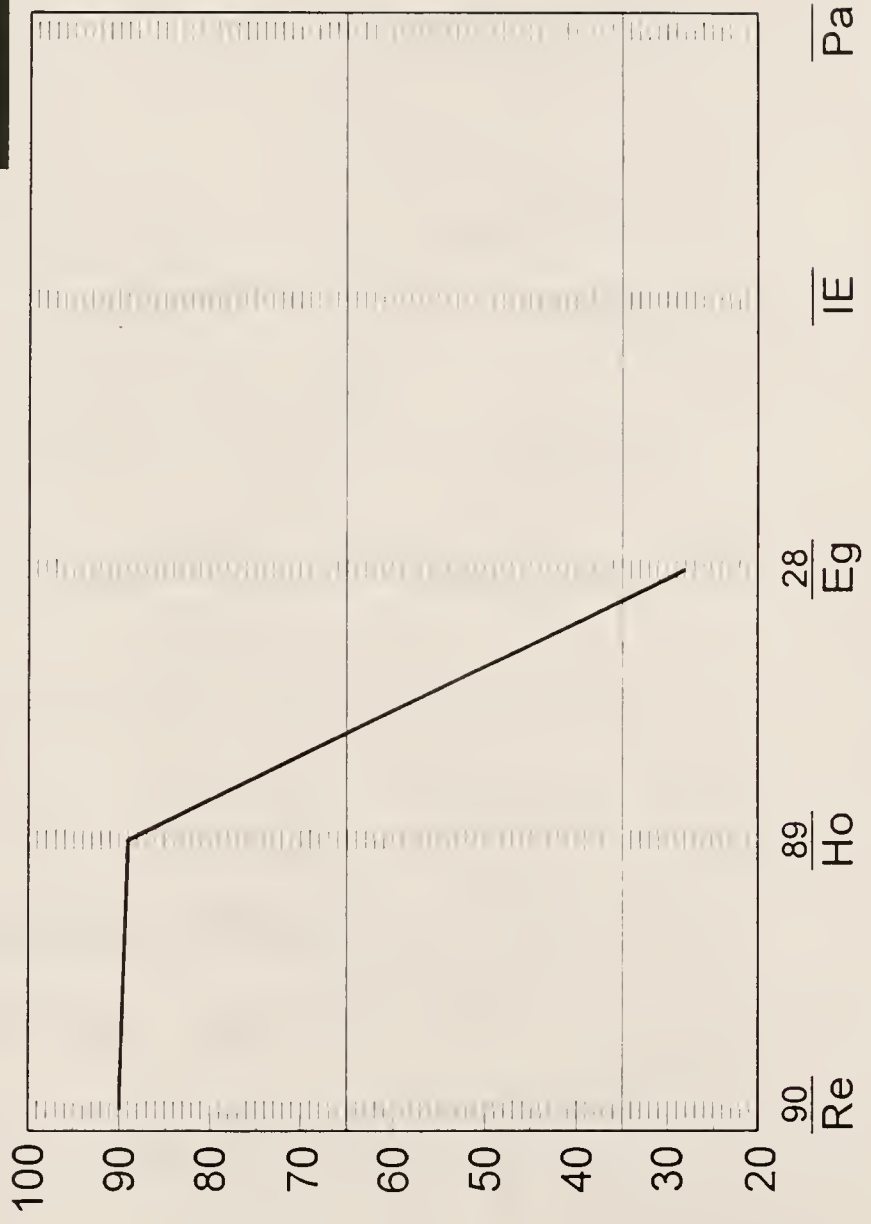
Honesty - Your score on the component of the DAP which measures honesty places you in the 89th percentile. This means that 89% of individuals receiving scores on this part of the test scored below you and that 11% of individuals receiving scores on this part of the test scored above you.

Your score on this component indicates that you value genuineness and have great respect for human integrity. You tend to be sincere in your relationships and try not to promise things you can't fulfill. You seem to be the kind of person who is not afraid to speak freely, and you are likely to present yourself completely and honestly to others. Most of the friends you make will tend to view you as loyal and truthful and respect you for seeking truth in others. Although you may not succeed at times, you strive to uphold high standards.

Draw-A-Person Profile Sheet[®]

Name _____ Age _____ Sex _____

Clinical Scales
Re = Responsibility
Ho = Honesty
Eg = Egalitarian
IE = Introversion/Extroversion
Pa = Passive Aggressive



APPENDIX I
INFORMATION RECALL

Below, please list as many pieces of information as you can remember about the interpretive feedback you just received. Please write only one idea on each line, and do not exceed the number of lines provided. You will have 5 minutes.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____

APPENDIX J
SCORE RECALL

The following questions are also relevant to your memory of the interpretive feedback. Please answer them as accurately as possible.

1. What was your percentile score on Honesty? ____%
2. What was your percentile score on Egalitarianism? ____%
3. What was your percentile score on Responsibility? ____%

APPENDIX K
EXPERIENCE RECALL

Below, please list as many personal experiences as you can remember that either fit or do not fit with the interpretive feedback that you received. It may help to take a few minutes to think about your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in social situations, for instance, with family members, friends, authority figures, or strangers. You may also want to recall your thoughts, feelings, or behaviors in more personal situations, for instance, when you are watching television shows, reading the news, or listening to other people. Remember: You can write down any experience you have had that you consider relevant to deciding the fit or lack of fit of your own life experiences with the test feedback. Please do not exceed the number of lines provided. You will have 10 minutes.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

11. _____

12. _____

13. _____

14. _____

15. _____

APPENDIX L
INTEREST FORM

The psychological assessment class will continue to meet through the end of this semester. As training progresses it will continue to be beneficial for the graduate students in the class to practice the test procedures with undergraduate volunteers. Unfortunately, introductory psychology students cannot get additional research credit. (Please answer all of the questions.)

1. How interested would you be in volunteering to take an additional personality test without credit?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Not at all

Very

interested

interested

2. How interested would you be if we arranged it so that you could receive extra credit toward your introductory psychology class grade in exchange for volunteering to take an additional personality test?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Not at all

Very

interested

interested

3. Regarding both of the questions above, please explain your interest or lack of interest below.

4. If you were to participate in another testing session, which of the following personality or social aspects about yourself would you be interested in receiving feedback about? Please circle any that might interest you.

Intellectual versus Emotional Reasoning

Introversion versus Extraversion

Egalitarian versus Non-Egalitarian

Honesty versus Dishonesty

Racial/Gender Self-Awareness versus Non-Awareness

Responsibility versus Irresponsibility

APPENDIX M
PERCEPTIONS QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer each and every question below. Prior research has discovered that the perceptions of test takers are valuable in providing key information about assessment procedures, the test itself, the test interpreter, and the test taker. We realize that you may not feel as if you have enough information to answer some of the questions. Some of the questions may depend on your "best guess". Even vague intuitions can be useful. Circle the number after each question that best represents your answer.

1. How interesting was the DAP test to take?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Not at all

Very

interesting

interesting

2. How difficult was the DAP test to take?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Not at all

Very

difficult

difficult

3. How much effort did you put into taking the DAP test?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Not much

Very much

at all

4. Were you at your best today?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7
 Not at all Very much
 so

5. How personally responsible do you feel for your
 performance on the DAP test?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7
 Not at all Very
 responsible responsible

6. How responsible were factors outside of your own
 personality and effort (such as distractions, luck, time)
 for your performance on the DAP test?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7
 Not at all Very
 responsible responsible

7. How much do you think artistic ability influenced your
 scores on the DAP?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7
 Not much Very much
 at all

8. How clear do you think the guidelines are for scoring the
 DAP?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7
 Not at all Very
 clear clear

9. Irrespective of the test score, how honest do you think
 you really are?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Not at all Very
honest honest

10. Irrespective of the test score, how egalitarian do you think you really are?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Not at all Very
egalitarian egalitarian

11. Irrespective of the test score, how responsible do you think you really are?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Not at all Very
responsible responsible

12. If you were to take a different test measuring the same aspects of your personality, do you think you would do about the same?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Not at all Very much
the same the same

13. How important do you view these three personality characteristics to your sense of self?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Not at all Very
important important

14. How comfortable did you feel drawing the picture?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Not at all Very
 comfortable comfortable
 15. How comfortable did you feel receiving the interpretive
 feedback?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Not at all Very
 comfortable comfortable
 16. Studies show that clinicians with a "feeling" approach to
 interpreting DAP drawings are more accurate than clinicians
 with an "intellectual" approach to interpretation. In your
 opinion, is the trainee who interpreted your DAP test more
 "feeling" or more "intellectual?"

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

More More
 feeling intellectual
 17. Studies show that DAP interpreters who think creatively
 and who are socially sensitive to subtle nuances in
 interpersonal behavior are more accurate in their
 interpretations. In your opinion, how creative was the
 trainee who interpreted your DAP?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Not at all Very
 creative creative
 18. How socially sensitive was the trainee who interpreted
 your DAP?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Not at all
sensitive

Very
sensitive

19. If you had to rate the expertise of the interpreter,
what would that be?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Not at all
expert

Very much
expert

20. Most clinicians uphold the accuracy of the DAP, but some
research findings have questioned the validity of the DAP
test. In your opinion, should the DAP be abandoned as a
personality test?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Absolutely
not

Absolutely
yes

21. How discrepant was the feedback you received on the
honesty measure from how you normally think about or
perceive yourself?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Not at all
discrepant

Very
discrepant

22. How discrepant was the feedback you received on the
egalitarian measure from how you normally think about or
perceive yourself?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Not at all
discrepant

Very
discrepant

23. How discrepant was the feedback you received on the responsibility measure from how you normally think about or perceive yourself?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Not at all

Very

discrepant

discrepant

APPENDIX N DEBRIEFING

The study that you have just completed was designed to assess the effect of providing individuals with information that is either consistent or discrepant with the way that they view themselves. All of the participants chosen for this study rated themselves high on egalitarianism, honesty, and responsibility. The personality tests that participants took today were never actually scored, and the written interpretations that participants received were created to either confirm or disconfirm egalitarian self-concepts. Therefore, the information we gave you regarding your level of egalitarianism may or may not be accurate because we provided one half of our participants with feedback that was similar to the way that they described themselves on a questionnaire at the beginning of the semester, and we provided the other half with information that was different from the way that they had described themselves.

Our major hypothesis is that individuals will differ in how they process feedback that does not fit with their egalitarian self-concepts. Individuals who are characteristically self-reflective and open to new information are expected to be more willing to examine discrepant feedback. Individuals who are typically more

conservative in how much they open themselves up may not be as willing to examine feedback that is inconsistent with their self-beliefs. Individuals who are more reluctant to attend to self-relevant information in general may evaluate discrepant feedback only when they feel there are situational demands to do so.

In some situations, it may be beneficial for individuals to be able to acknowledge, challenge, and even alter their self-perceptions. For example, people who hold views of themselves as egalitarian may not be aware that they have stereotypical attitudes and perceptions about particular groups in society. Individuals who are willing to consider the possibility that they have such biases, despite their egalitarian self-beliefs, may be more likely to think and act in ways that are consistent with their self-proclaimed egalitarianism. We are not sure what our findings will be, but it is possible that individuals who are open to new information may be more likely to consider feedback about themselves that leads to change.

We urge you to keep this information confidential. Please keep in mind that you will be helping to advance knowledge in the field of psychology by not discussing this study with others who may choose to participate in this experiment. Please feel free to ask the experimenter any questions that you may have at this time.

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY.

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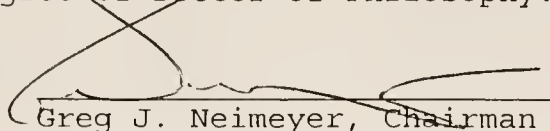
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Margaret "Peggy" Moore was born in Nassawadox, Virginia and grew up in Virginia and Delaware. She has three older brothers with families in the Mid-Atlantic area. Her mother attended college and started a new career as a math teacher while Peggy was in high school. Her father worked as a railroad conductor for 43 years. At the same time that Peggy is finishing graduate school, her parents are taking a well-deserved retirement to their beachhouse on Virginia's tranquil eastern shore.


Peggy received both her B.A. and M.A. in psychology at Wake Forest University. After receiving her Ph.D. in counseling psychology from the University of Florida, she will exchange wedding vows with her partner of five years and together they will move to Heidelberg, Germany. She will lecture for the University of Maryland Overseas Program and conduct research on stress in the military while working towards clinical licensure. She hopes to expand her clinical and research activities in the areas of race and gender issues and trauma recovery. Peggy has a passion for cats, and she enjoys outdoor activities, especially walking and cycling. She is looking forward to traveling in Europe and immersing herself in new and different cultures.

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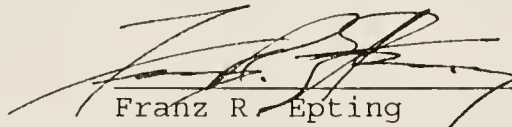
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Associate Professor of Psychology

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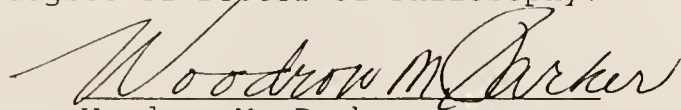
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